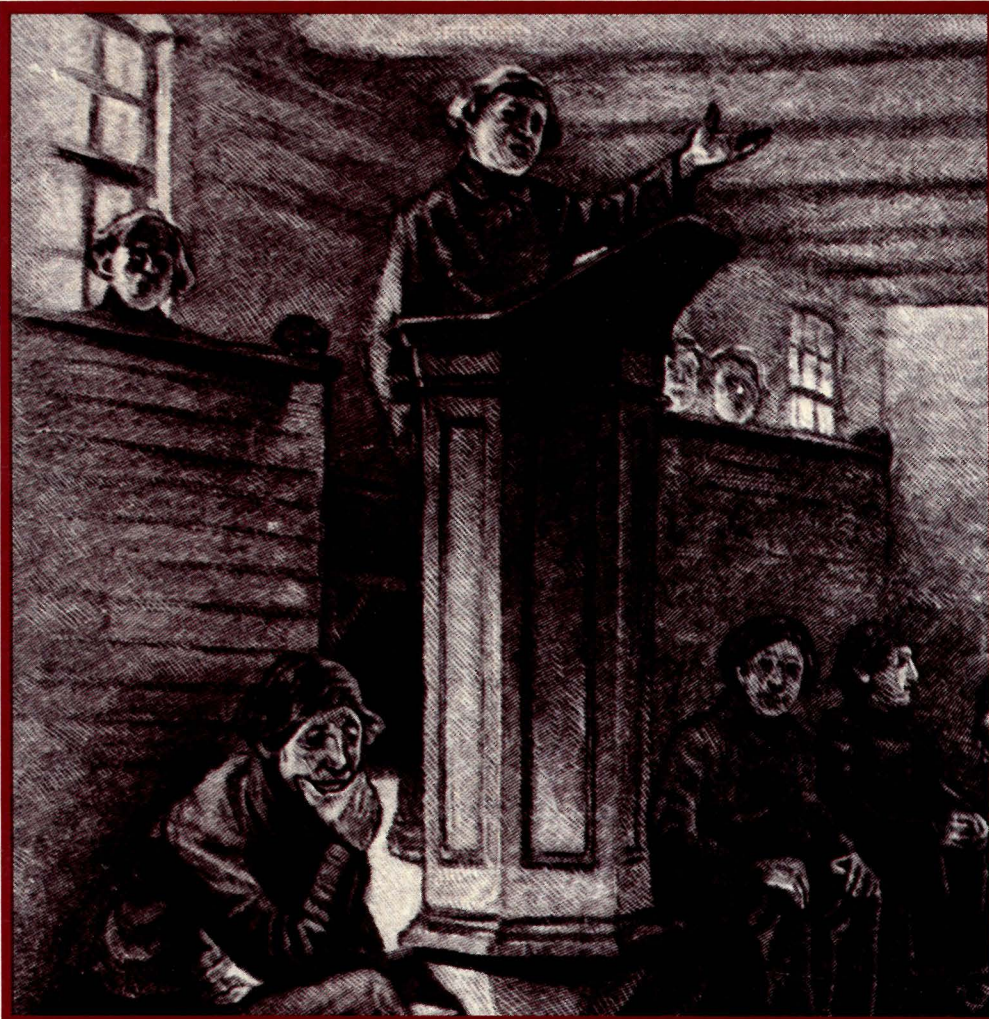


LOOKING BACK



IN FAITH

*Commemorating the
Centennial of
Manitoba Mennonite
Brethren in Photos
and Writing*

1888-1988

Looking Back In Faith

Looking Back In Faith

A commemorative collection of photos and writing to mark the centennial of Mennonite Brethren in Manitoba, 1888-1988.

Editors: Helmut Huebert, Harold Jantz, John Longhurst

Winnipeg, Manitoba: Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Centennial Committee.

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Foreword

One hundred years—a century! What a special privilege it is for the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba to celebrate not only a century of history, but a century of God's grace. Having begun as one small church in rural Manitoba, we find ourselves today in 39 congregations scattered throughout our province. Numerical growth, however, tells only a small part of our story.

We celebrate the grace of God's salvation which through faith in Jesus Christ has made us a part of His people.

We celebrate the grace of His providential guidance, bringing us together from distant parts of the world and from many different ethnic backgrounds so that today we worship and witness in many different languages.

We celebrate the grace that has given us the vision and the will to be involved and committed to extensive gospel ministries at home and abroad.

We celebrate the grace that has blessed and sustained us in love and unity enabling us over the years to do together what we could not do alone.

We celebrate the grace that calls us in this anniversary year to give thanks to the Lord,
to call on His name,
to make public what He has done,
to sing to Him, to praise Him,
to tell of His wonderful acts;
and as we move into the second century,
to look to the Lord and His strength
seeking His face only.

Psalm 105:1-4

*John B. Epp
Moderator*

John B. Epp, moderator during the Centennial convention.





Preface

The prose and poetry in this book, along with the photographs which are printed here, represent the work of a number of people.

More than a year before the beginning of the year marking the centennial of Manitoba Mennonite Brethren, a committee was put together to begin thinking of ways in which the occasion might be commemorated. One of the suggestions was a centennial book.

Looking Back In Faith is the result. Besides the editors, several groups were especially helpful in bringing it into being. A Literary Commission, consisting of Lillian Kuhl and Arlene Voth of Winkler and Irma Epp and Esther Wiens of Winnipeg, was very helpful in collecting much of the prose which went into the book. A Photography Commission, consisting of Eldon DeFehr and Irwin Peters of Winkler, and Dave Dueck of Winnipeg, did a lot to bring together the photos.

In addition, two major photo libraries, the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg, and the Mennonite Brethren Herald, generously allowed access to their files. For these we are very grateful.

Look at the pictures and read the stories and essays. As you do, we hope your response too will be to say, "Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations." Nothing could satisfy us more.

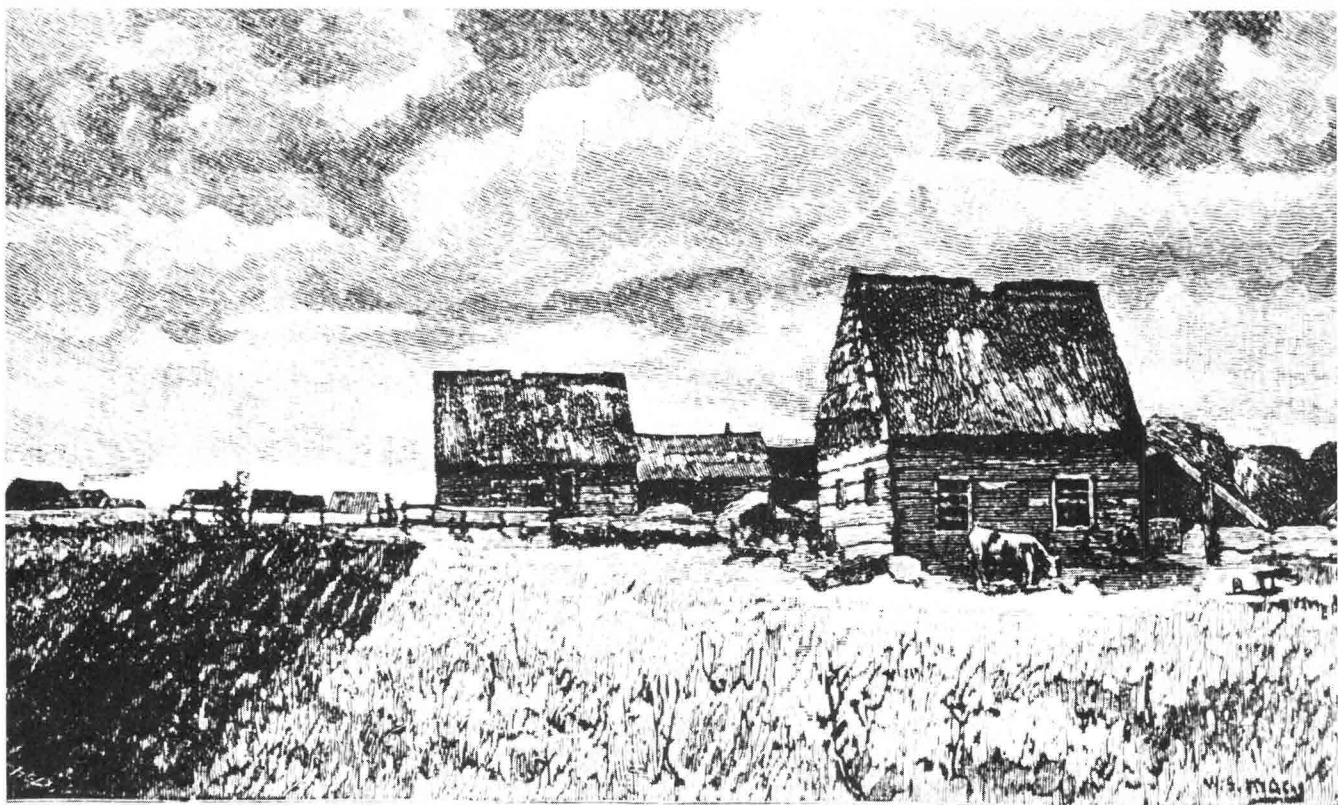
The Editors

From top: Elmwood Church at worship, 1979; McIvor Sunday school class, Helga and Helmut Mierau in charge; Missions and Church Extension workers at the 1983 provincial convention, Allan Labun, moderator, centre.





Top: 1963 General Conference of the North American Mennonite Brethren Churches, Sunday celebration, held at old civic auditorium in downtown Winnipeg; Manitoba has hosted a number of General Conference and Canadian conventions over the years, beginning in 1898. Bottom: leaving the 1963 General Conference worship service.



First Mennonite Brethren church in Canada



From top: Typical late 19th century southern Manitoba village scene; U.S. Mennonite Brethren evangelist Heinrich Voth, a key figure in beginning of first Mennonite Brethren church in Canada; David and Helena Dyck. Dyck evangelized with Voth and then led the Winkler church.

“I can say that we were very Happy”

On a cold December evening in 1886, six new Christians met with American Mennonite Brethren evangelist Heinrich Voth in a village in southern Manitoba. In a letter to fellow evangelist David Dyck, Voth wrote that the group “discussed and shared many things of importance. Then, because of our love towards one another, our desire to further oppose the world and sin, and our mutual determination to remain true to Jesus, we concluded our time together by observing the Lord’s Supper and the washing of feet. I can say that we were very happy.”

Voth, a minister from Mountain Lake, Minnesota, and Dyck, a minister from Kansas, had been asked by the 1883 annual convention of the Mennonite Brethren Conference of the United States to go to Manitoba to explore opportunities for missions and evangelism.

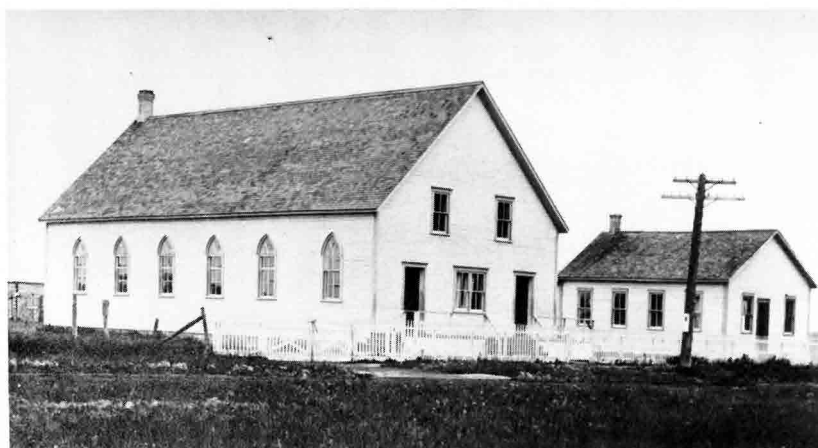
Interest in outreach was a hallmark of the young U.S. Mennonite Brethren Conference, formed in 1878, only four years after emigrants from Russia established the first North American Mennonite Brethren Church in Kansas.

Voth and Dyck made their first visit in June, 1884, visiting people in a number of Mennonite villages, and over the next five years Voth made at least one visit annually. His first services were held in the village of Hoffnungsfeld, just south of Winkler, where he was immediately opposed by members of other





Clockwise from the top: Winkler Church meeting place, built in 1947, used until 1988; scene from a typical late 19th century southern Manitoba home; the first Mennonite Brethren meetingplace in Canada (r), beside the second Winkler meeting place; H.S. Voth, Winkler church leader of the 1930s and 1940s.



Mennonite denominations. On one occasion three critics attended his service, planning to seize the American and send him back to Minnesota. Their plan fell through when at least one of them was converted.

In 1886, Voth conducted the first Mennonite Brethren baptism services in Manitoba when eight adults were baptized in Dead Horse Creek near Winkler. In December he conducted services with the eight and others in homes in Hoffnungsfield and Blumstein and in the village school in Reinland. There was continued opposition, but he found many people "who were afraid of being lost and who feared eternal punishment." Together with the fact that he was a kindly gentleman, sincere and well-versed in the Bible, many doors were opened to him.

Delegates to the 1886 U.S. Mennonite Brethren convention received Voth's report of the baptism with joy and gratitude, and asked him to return to Manitoba three times the next year. Voth realized that his occasional visits were inadequate, and invited Gerhard Wiebe, an ordained Mennonite Brethren minister in Russia, to come to Manitoba to lead the small group.

After Wiebe arrived in 1888, the group of 16 members was organized as the first Mennonite Brethren congregation in Canada. Other Mennonite Brethren families recently arrived from Russia joined the fledgling church, and new converts were also added to

the membership. In 1889 a building was constructed at Burwalde, near Dead Horse Creek, the place of the first baptism.

In 1895 David Dyck, who had visited Manitoba in 1884, came to serve the new church, now grown to 84 members, as leading minister and itinerant evangelist. In 1897, many of the members were ready to move the meeting place to Winkler, although others feared that the "urban" influence of the little town would be corrupting. A compromise resulted in the church being situated at the edge of town, but only after its move had been halted a mile away for several days.

Like the American Mennonite Brethren who had helped to create it, the young congregation had a dynamic spirit of outreach. Daughter congregations were soon established at Grossweide, north of Plum Coulee, and at Kronsart, north-east of Winkler.

The beginning of the Canadian Mennonite Brethren Church was small, but optimism about the new venture was so great that the Mennonite Brethren Conference of North America held its convention in Winkler in 1898. Since the original meeting place was too small for the gathering, a new building was erected on the same site. A highlight of the convention was the appointment of the first missionaries to go out from the North American Mennonite Brethren Church, the N.N. Hieberts.





Clockwise from top: New Winkler meetingplace built in 1987; Ted and Mary Goossen and Dale and Marge Warkentin, Winkler members, ordained to ministry in 1983; marking the 100th anniversary of the first MB baptism in Canada, 1986; the Winkler Church at worship in 1985.



In 1907 a number of Mennonite Brethren families living in Winnipeg asked the Winkler congregation for pastoral assistance. The leader of the Winkler Church, Johann Warkentin, took great interest in the little group, making periodic visits to the city to serve them. He purchased an empty lot, bought a small chapel, and moved the chapel onto the lot. In 1913 the Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg was established with 22 members.

In 1924 the Winkler Church had 324 members and, until 1929, it was the largest Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada. In 1930 the meeting place was enlarged again. In 1947 a new church building, seating 600, was built in the heart of Winkler.

The Winkler Mennonite Brethren Church has been one of the most influential Mennonite Brethren churches in the country. Many pastors, missionaries and church leaders came from its membership and studied at the Winkler Bible Institute, originally called the Peniel Bible School, which was established in 1925.

Today the Winkler Church has 431 members, some of them descendants of the first Mennonite Brethren Christians in Canada. In December, 1987, the congregation moved into its new meeting place, a multi-purpose facility with an 800-seat sanctuary and a gymnasium/fellowship hall. Pastor Herb Van Bergen and assistant pastor Wally Klassen hope that the new building will be community-oriented, continuing the tradition of outreach established at Winkler 100 years ago.



Milestones in Manitoba Mennonite Brethren History

1874-75: Coming of Bergthaler Mennonites from Russia to Manitoba.

1883: Mennonite Brethren in the United States decide to send evangelists to the Manitoba Mennonites.

1884: In early December Heinrich Voth and David Dyck visit Manitoba as itinerant Mennonite Brethren evangelists for the first time.

1886: On May 30 Jacob and Anna Banman and the John Nickels (we don't have her name), are the first Mennonite couples to be baptized by Voth and Dyck as result of their evangelistic work.

1888: First Mennonite Brethren church formed in Canada, with 16 members, among the Mennonite settlers of the west reserve in Manitoba. Gerhard Wiebe, just arrived from Russia, appointed leader. Church located at Burwalde.

1888: Johann Warkentin becomes the first teacher of a Mennonite Brethren Sunday school.

1889: First meeting place built at Burwalde.

1895: David Dyck, a strong leader, moves to Winkler from Kirk, Colorado, by wagon; church has 84 members.

1896: First affiliate congregation to Burwalde congregation formed, at Grossweide. Jacob Heide is leader.

1897: Second affiliate congregation to the Burwalde Church formed, this time northeast of Winkler, at Kronsart.

1897: For the first time delegates from Canadian churches attend the Mennonite Brethren convention in the United States. Six delegates go.

1898: Church at Burwalde moved into Winkler (though not without hesitation—the building was held at the edge of town while the congregation debated whether they really wanted to be in town).

1898: First North American Mennonite Brethren convention outside of U.S. held in Winkler.

1899: First Sunday school 'kinderfest' held at Winkler.

1901: First young people's Christian Endeavour held.

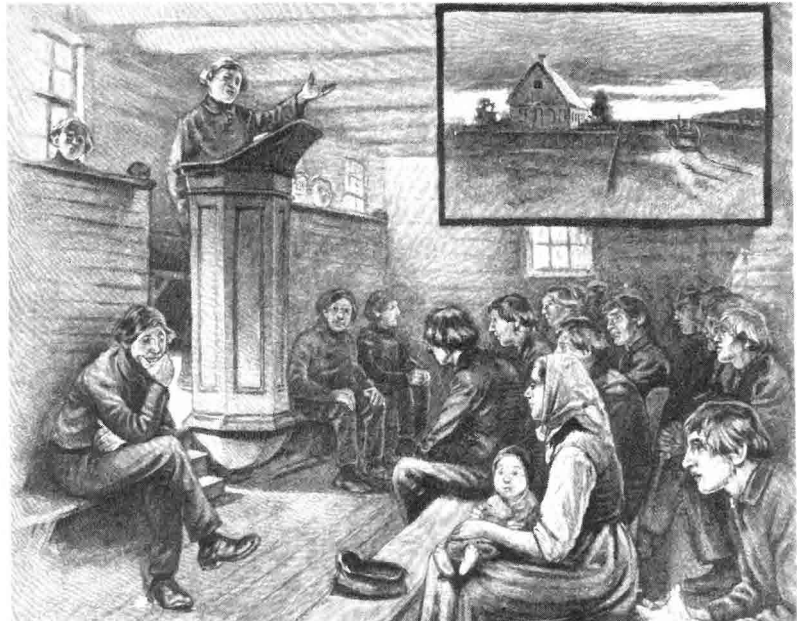
1903: Winkler Church officially incorporated.

1904: First choir organized, a singing group without a leader.

1905: Peter P. Dyck becomes the first choir leader.

1906: David Dyck moves on to Saskatchewan to help the growing circle of Mennonite Brethren churches there. John Warkentin becomes his successor and stays on as leader for 25 years.

1907: First missionary sewing circle formed.



Clockwise from top: Late 19th century Manitoba Mennonite church scene, with typical church building (inset); site at the Dead Horse Creek of the first MB baptism, (l-r), Frank Brown, Herb Van Bergen, William Schroeder and Arnie Neufeld; first Burwalde meetingplace, predecessor of Winkler church.



From the top: Johann Warkentin, influential early leader of Winkler Church, 1906-31; James Nikkel, former director of Manitoba Missions and Church Extension, with Sig Wall at The Pas; (l-r) Joe Wiebe, Ella Guderian, Jake Suderman and Victor Adrian during a 1966 visit to the Lindal Church.



1907: First group of Mennonite Brethren families began meeting in Winnipeg, with occasional help from Winkler leaders.

1909: Mennonite Brethren church formally organized in Winnipeg. Johann Warkentin of Winkler buys a lot and moves a building onto it for a meeting place.

1913: Conference assumes responsibility for mission work in Winnipeg. William J. Bestvaters assigned as city missionaries.

1913: Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Churches join the Northern District of Mennonite Brethren Churches (Saskatchewan) in the first inter-provincial Canadian conference.

1915: Site for the first mission chapel purchased in Winnipeg. Basement meeting place constructed on it.

1915: Anna J. Thiessen assigned as full-time mission worker, doing hospital visitation, children's work and teaching sewing classes for older girls. She serves the conference until 1947.

1919: Helen Warkentin of Winkler is ordained as missionary and is sent to India in 1920 as the first missionary of the Manitoba churches.

1923: Great migration of Mennonites from Russia begins.

1924: As the first wave of new members from Russia joins the churches, the Manitoba churches have 380 members and four meeting places.

1925: Winkler Bible Institute (Peniel) founded under the leadership of recently arrived Abraham H. Unruh from Russia.

1925: Anna Thiessen becomes matron of the first Mary Martha Home for working girls in Winnipeg. Stays on until 1947.

1925: C.N. Hiebert becomes city missionary and continues on in a very effective ministry until 1941.

1929: Manitoba Mennonite Brethren conference formally organized, decides to meet twice annually for conventions, in spring and fall.

1930: Mennonite Brethren now have some twenty churches and about 1500 members.

1933: First outreach mission church directed toward non-Mennonites formed at Lindal, near Morden.

1937: First provincial Sunday school committee elected.

1937: First provincial youth committee elected.

1939: Winnipeg city mission transferred to Manitoba conference.

1940: Formal incorporation of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba.

1941: Winnipeg city mission becomes the Logan Gospel Light Mission.

1943: First full-time outreach missionary, Jacob P. Kehler, appointed to Lindal.

1944: Winkler Bible Institute accepted as a school of the Manitoba conference.

1944: Mennonite Brethren Bible College established in Winnipeg. A.H. Unruh becomes first president.

1945: Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute (MBCI) founded in Winnipeg.

1945: Outreach mission stations founded at Winnipegosis and Ashern.

1947: On February 23 the first broadcast of the Gospel Light Hour begun, by MBBC students Henry Brucks, Henry Poetker and Bert Loewen, the forerunner of Mennonite Brethren Communications.

1948: Conference decides to move to one convention a year.

1950: Manitoba has 27 churches with over 2600 members.

1951: A German radio broadcast, with William Falk as speaker, begins.

1957: City mission committee and home missions board combined to form one committee.

1958: David B. Wiens begins the first broadcasts of the Russian Gospel Light Hour.

1963: MBCI becomes a responsibility of the conference.

1968: Winkler Bible Institute moves onto a new campus in Winkler.

1969: First executive director for home missions appointed.

1969: The first of five northern churches is begun, at The Pas, with James and Elfrieda Nikkel providing the leadership. At the beginning the group is called the Neighborhood Life Group.

1977: Production of MB Communications first television releases begun.

1981: Northern District of Mennonite Brethren Churches formed.

1982: Incorporation Act of 1940 amended.

1985: Mennonite Brethren Communications moves into modern, well-equipped new facility.

1987: MBCI moves into large new expanded school facilities.

1987: Manitoba Mennonite Brethren have 39 churches and 5800 members.

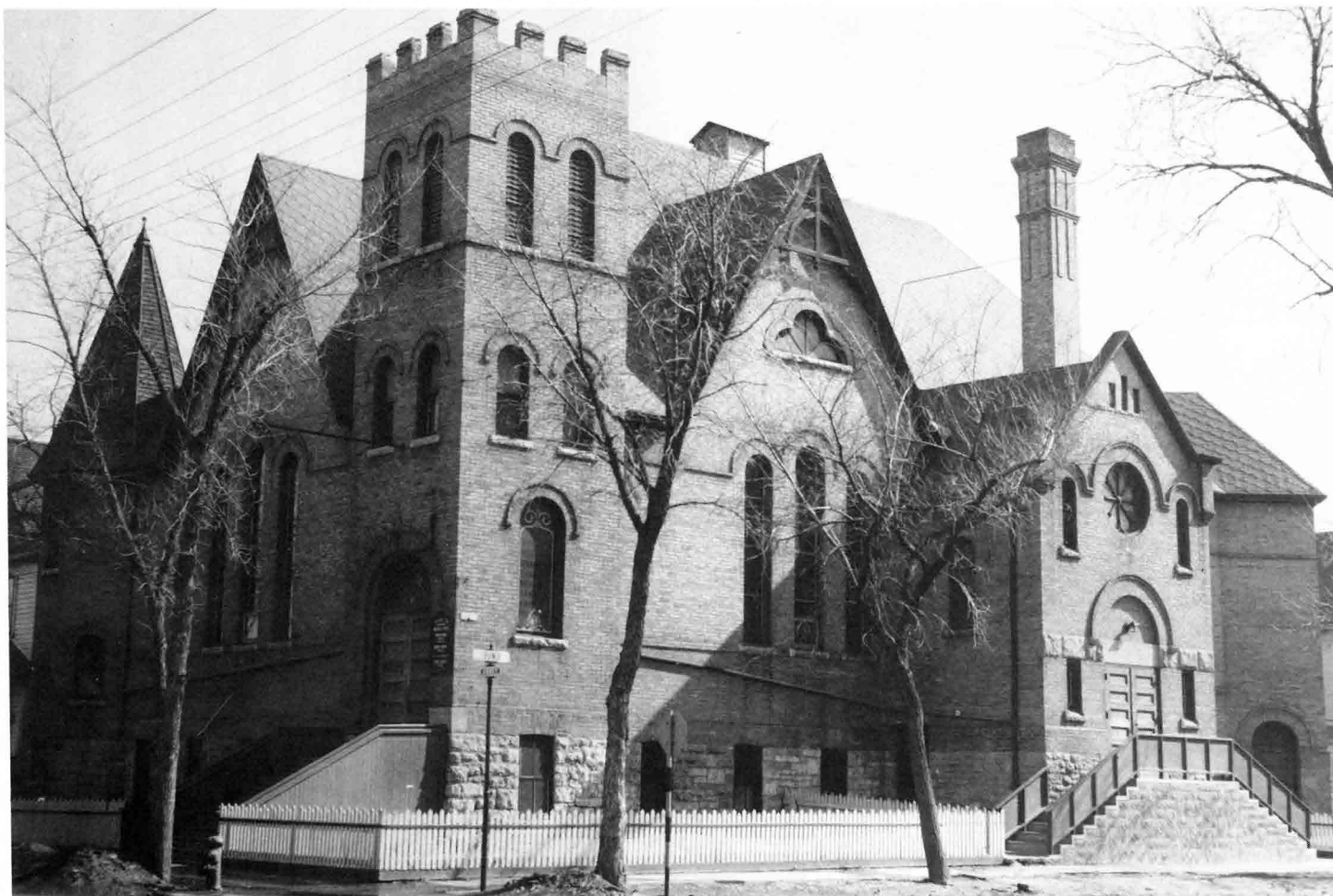
1988: Centennial year of Manitoba Mennonite Brethren.

From the top: An Ontario group came to help the Snow Lake Church build a meetingplace in 1979; the St. Boniface church (Chretienne Eglise Evangelique de St. Boniface) rented this building; a 1987 baptism of the North Kildonan Church, Ron Braun, at left, minister in charge.





Clockwise from top: 1916 Sunday school of the first Mennonite Brethren church in Winnipeg; young girls at the North End Church with Anna Thiessen (l); Erdmann Nikkel, early pastor of the Mennonite Brethren church in Winnipeg, 1921-25; Bible study at the first Mennonite Brethren church in Winnipeg, 1920.



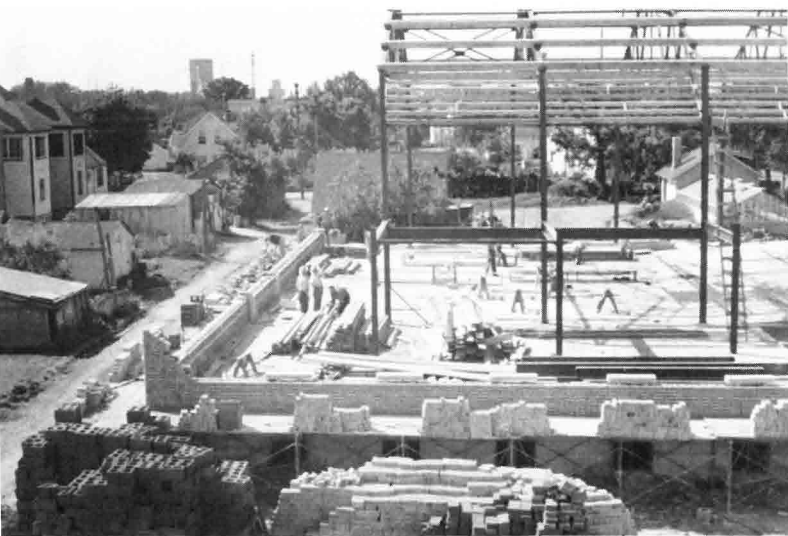
Above: The first very large meetingplace acquired by Mennonite Brethren in Winnipeg, the South End Church, bought in 1939; below, the 29th Canadian Convention of Mennonite Brethren, assembled at Winnipeg's River Park.



29th M.B.R. CONFERENCE OF CANADA JULY 3, 1938 WINNIPEG, MAN.

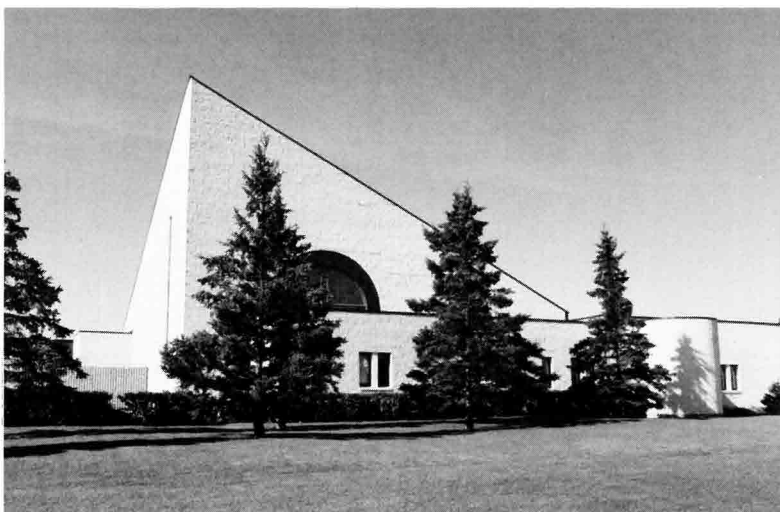


Clockwise from top left: First meetingplace of the North Kildonan Church, on Edison Avenue, 1930; North Kildonan Mothers' Day celebration, 1944; North Kildonan, 1948; present North Kildonan church meetingplace, with Donwood South, Mennonite Brethren senior citizens residence behind; 1964 baptismal group at North Kildonan, with ministers Victor Toews (l) and William Falk (r); a North Kildonan Church choir, 1938, Cornelius Klassen, centre, conductor.



Clockwise from top left: Groundbreaking for the Elmwood Church meetingplace, 1952, in the centre (l-r) C.A. DeFehr, A.H. Unruh, D.K. Duerksen, J.A. Toews; putting in the foundations; the finished building; and Elmwood Church service in 1984; Henry Brucks with a group baptized in 1981; Elmwood meetingplace partially completed.

Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Churches

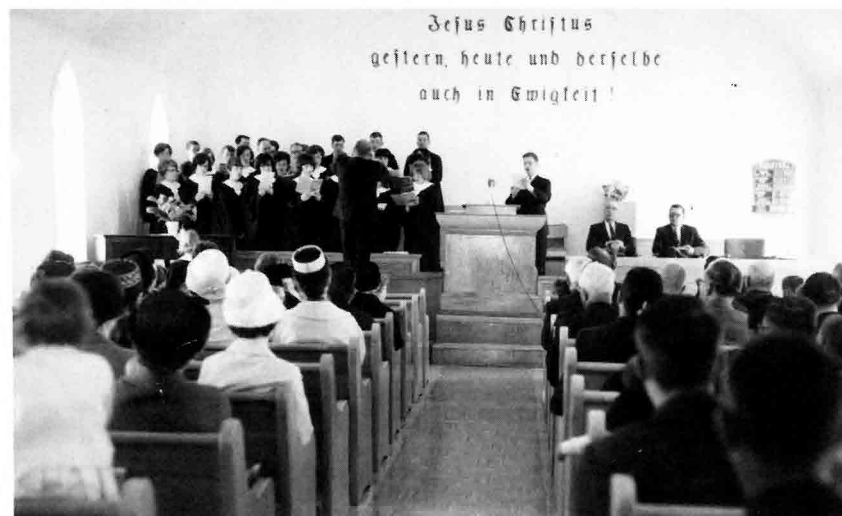
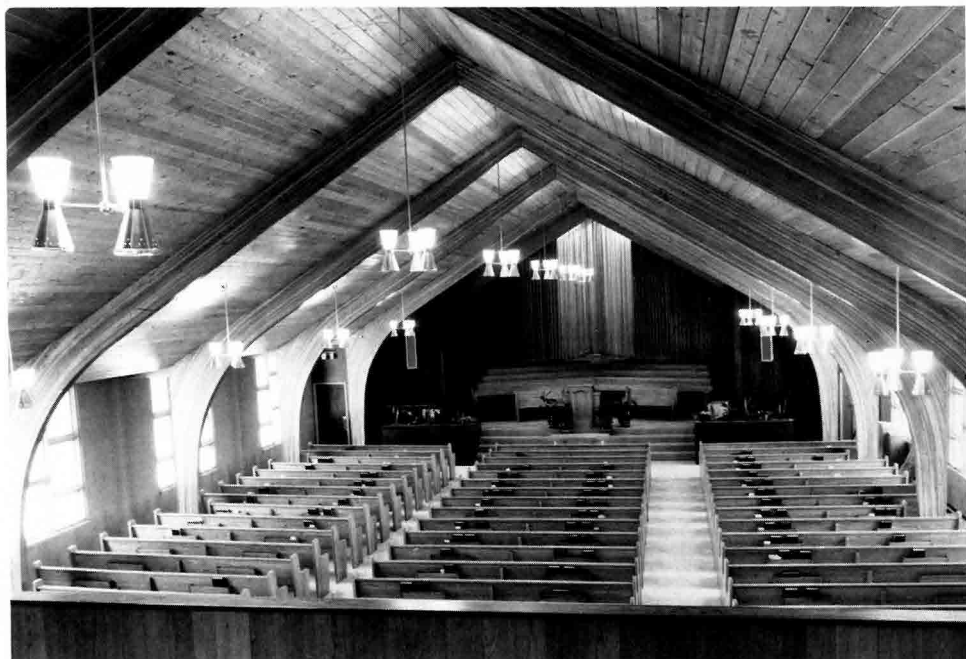


(Name of community first, followed by name of church and date established. Previous names of church in brackets.)

Alexander: 1954-73
 (Alexander, 1928-29; Griswold, 1929-54)
 Altona: South Park—1981 (Altona, 1927-51)
 Arnaud: 1925-80
 Ashern (mission church) 1945-59
 Brandon: Richmond Park—1956
 Carman: Gospel Light—1962
 Cranberry Portage: Grace Church—1982
 Domain: 1952-81 (LaSalle and Osborne, 1926-52)
 Elm Creek: 1926
 Gnadenthal: 1925-54
 Grossweide: 1925-64 (merged with Horndean)
 Halbstadt: 1933-?
 Horndean: 1932-83
 Justice: 1944 (Brookdale, 1930-44)
 Killarney: Lakeview—1967 (Holmfild/Smith Hill, 1928-45, merged with Lena)
 Leaf Rapids: Christian Fellowship—1974
 Lena: 1928-67
 Lindal (mission church) 1934-66
 Manitou: 1927
 Margaret: 1929-40
 Marquette: 1937-78 (merged with Elmwood)
 Melita: 1932-37
 Moosehorn: 1924-late 1930s
 Morden: 1930
 Newton: Community Fellowship—1928
 Niverville: 1929
 Osterwick: 1929-1930s
 Portage La Prairie: Westview—1962-74

From the top: Elm Creek Church baptism, early '50s, in the church's baptismal pond; Newton Siding meetingplace, 1946; Melvor Church meetingplace.

Selkirk: Community—1986
 Snow Lake: Christian Centre Fellowship—1979
 Sperling: 1932-1970s
 Springstein: 1935-61
 St. Boniface: L'eglise Chretienne Evangelique de
 St. Boniface—1982
 St. Rose du Lac: 1933-?
 Steinbach: 1927
 The Pas: Neighborhood Life—1972
 Thompson: Christian Centre Fellowship—1972
 Transcona: Community—1983
 Winkler: 1888 (Burwalde)
 Winnipeg: Brooklands Community—1964
 Winnipeg: Central—1960
 Winnipeg: Chinese—1986
 Winnipeg: Cornerstone—1983
 Winnipeg: Elmwood—1953 (North End, 1909-53)
 Winnipeg: Fort Garry—1963
 (Logan Gospel Light Mission Church, 1956-59;
 Fort Rouge, 1959-63)
 Winnipeg: Maples—1980
 Winnipeg: McIvor Avenue—1976
 Winnipeg: North Kildonan—1938
 Winnipeg: Portage Avenue—1962
 (South End, 1936-62)
 Winnipeg: Portuguese—1986
 Winnipeg: River East—1963 (Springfield Heights)
 Winnipeg: Salem—1963 (Logan Gospel Light Church,
 1963-65)
 Winnipeg: Spanish Christian Church—1985
 Winnipeg: St. Vital—1987
 Winnipeg: Valley Gardens—1984
 Winnipeg: Westwood—1979
 Winnipegosis: 1939-68



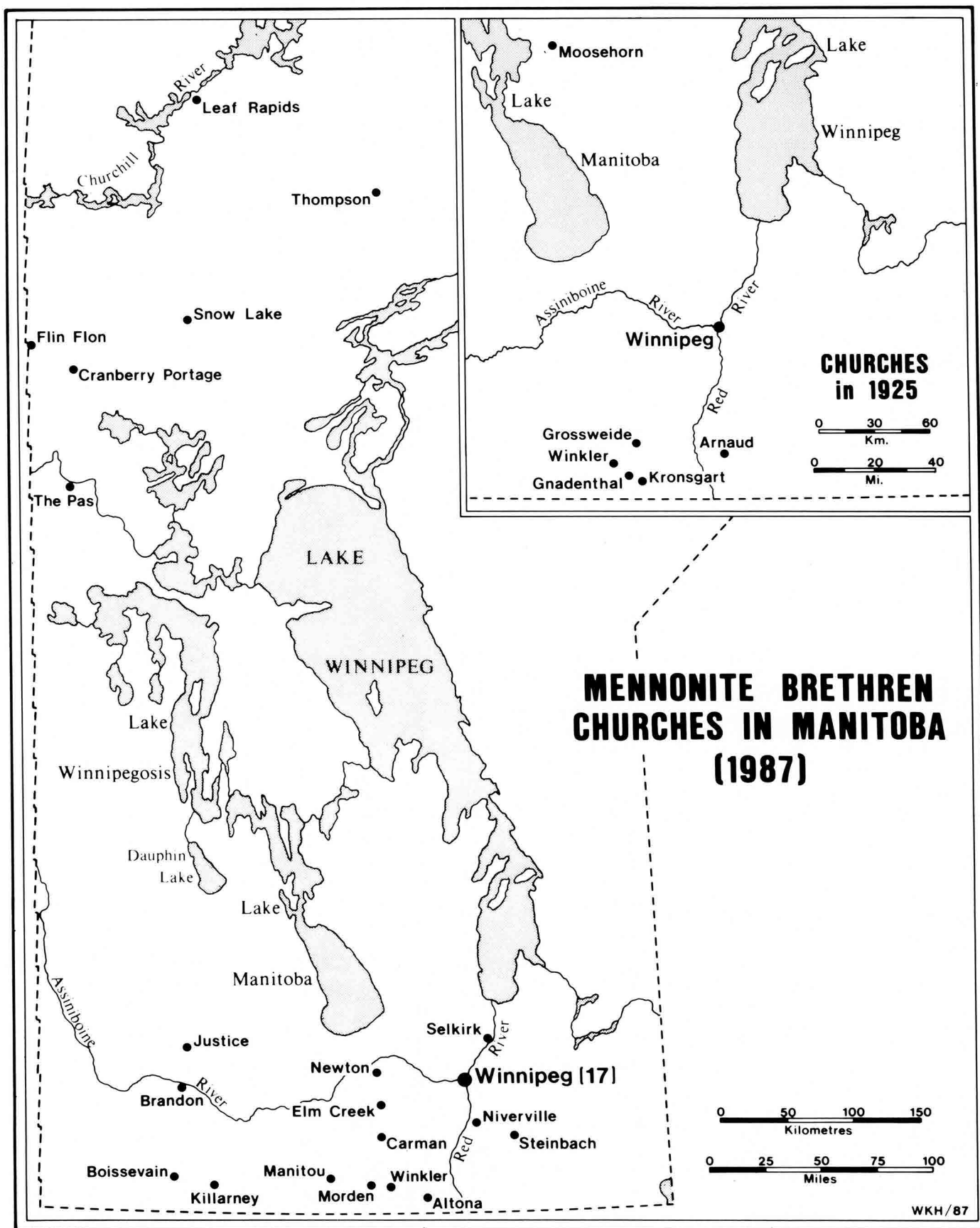
Clockwise from the top: Fort Garry Church sanctuary; Niverville Church in the late '60s; Thompson Church, pastor Gary Sawatzky, at right; Thompson Church meetingplace, a renovated apartment block, 1984.





Clockwise from right: Abe and Anne Quiring (middle) with Horndean (top) and Morris (bottom) churches, where they served in the mid-'50s; anniversary celebration at Morden, 1980; Cranberry Portage; Steinbach Church sanctuary; Morden Church male chorus (c) 1960; Arnaud Church as it formally ceased as a church, 1981.





A Spirit of Common Task Continues

How can you capture the spirit of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba? It is not an easy task. Attending a provincial convention affords one view, but it is incomplete. The total picture in 1988 includes 39 congregations and close to 6,000 members of the body of Christ, each one indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The very name of the provincial organization is significant—it is the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba, not “churches.” It illustrates a sense of unity, a unity reflected in support for the missionary and educational activities of the provincial organization. There is a commendable feeling of responsibility for a common task. Conventions are well attended and many gifted people work long hours and attend many meetings.

The sense of unity is also evident in giving. Per member giving for Manitoba provincial projects ranks consistently high among the provinces, as does giving to Canadian and General Conference activities. Money due the Canadian Conference is collected on behalf of the members and submitted directly to that organization, permitting the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba to meet its financial obligations to the national conference every year. While members can be satisfied with their giving, there is a sobering, countervailing statistic: Manitoba’s percentage increase in membership was below the Canadian Mennonite Brethren average in several recent years.

Another illustration of the spirit in Manitoba can be found at the provincial convention, where the devotional and inspirational aspects are highlights for many delegates.

There are other less quantifiable indicators of the spirit of commonality. Members of the various provincial boards take their work seriously, and members take their recommendations seriously also—decisions are not rubber-stamped in acquiescent conventions. Decisions are questioned and modified in true family fashion. There have been some hurtful controversies, but history shows relatively few cases of conference-wide fractures.

While there is unity, there is not unanimity. Individual voices protest the trend to greater centralization, favoring more congregational independence. Some question the growing proportion of giving that is automatically ear-marked for projects beyond the home congregation. Differences in theology and church polity also exist, although those differences can also be wholesome. On the whole, people are grateful for the spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood in the Conference. They share the desire to maintain the unity of the spirit (Eph. 4:3).

More than half of the Mennonite Brethren in Manitoba live in the city of Winnipeg; the rest are widely scattered

around the province. This tends to centre Conference administration in Winnipeg, but it has not created large rural/urban tensions. City people who serve on boards show consideration for country colleagues who may have to travel long distances to meetings.

One source of contention, however, is the substantial support for the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute in Winnipeg, which is practically out-of-reach for Mennonite Brethren in the country. Not everyone seems to understand the seriousness of the slump in agricultural economy, and rural congregations have resigned themselves to continued support for the city school.

The 100th anniversary of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Manitoba is a time to celebrate a century of God’s grace. At the same time, it is a time of soul-searching, both as individuals and corporately. Our human spirits must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. We must confess that in matters of holy living we are often deficient. Newcomers remark on the rarity of public corporate confession of sin at special occasions in our churches and at our conventions.

Our Christian love is in danger of being eroded by individualism and by the materialistic influence of affluence. The zeal for missions and evangelism, characteristic of the Conference in the past, seems to have flagged. We can take pride in our extensive Conference programs, but resist the temptation to delegate our personal responsibility to salaried conference employees and to boards. Nor is mere activity a substitute for a vibrant relationship to Jesus Christ.

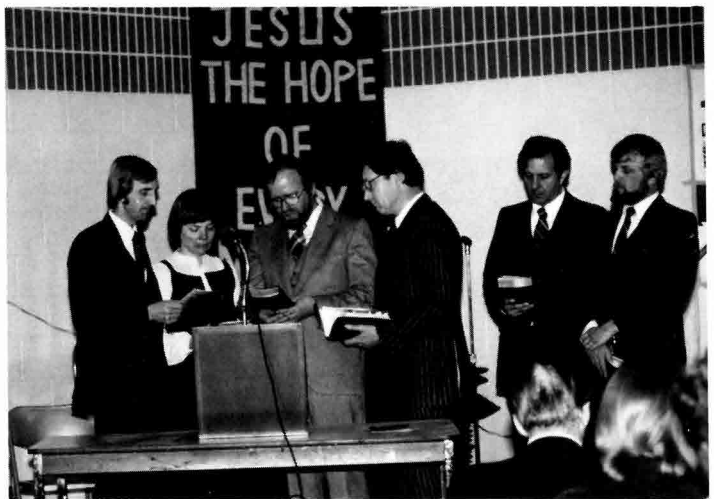
Scripture exhorts us to be “aglow with in the Spirit” (Romans 12:11) and to “walk by the Spirit and not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). True Christian faith is more than institutionalized religion.

The New Testament church, well before its first centennial, had its spirit analyzed in the seven letters from the Head of the church (Rev. 2, 3). The mixture of positive and negative traits probably reflects the spirit of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba. Each member congregation was exhorted to overcome.

So to we must strive to overcome, but not in our own strength. To God we pray, in the words of the Psalmist, “Renew a right spirit in me” (Psalms 51:10) and together we say, “To Him be glory in the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Church.”

William Schroeder

Opposite page, from top clockwise: Farewell to a group of Fort Rouge Church workers, 1960; Transcona Church chartering service, 1983; a 1979 Manitoba provincial convention scene, in the Steinbach Regional Secondary School; a Sunday school convention in the early '50s; a Manitoba convention, J.A. Toews leading, in the mid-'60s.





Peter P. Redekopp



Peter P. Redekopp; top photos, with wife Helena.

Absolute Faith in God



It's an emotional visit—my father, Peter P. Redekopp, 100 years-old, embraces Peter Loewen, a childhood friend from Clearbrook, B.C. They kiss, hold each other in his room at Salem Home in Winkler. They shed tears and they talk. They are so totally involved in conversation—God is so good, Jesus is our Lord and Saviour—that they forget to sit down. After that, they reminisce.

Imagine—100 years-old! Widowed for two years, his few remaining friends and relatives his age have hearing problems, weak voices and other disabilities. Visits from children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren fill some of the void—a void left by the passing of people who shared his childhood, youth and adult experiences.

The visit with Peter Loewen, understandably, opens a floodgate of feelings. They talk about the constant presence of the Lord and about the highly emotional issues of yesterday—conversion, worldliness, prayer, worship, family. They thrive on the knowledge of the saving grace of Jesus. They also recite poems and sing songs from childhood, some of them in Russian. They laugh with childlike delight.

His spiritual pilgrimage began in 1929, when he and his wife were rebaptized by Reverend Wilhelm Dyck and joined the Mennonite Brethren Church in Gnadental, Manitoba. From then on they were intensely involved in the church. He promoted the work of Mennonite Central Committee, was active in meat-canning, which provided food for needy people in other countries, and was instrumental in helping to get a meeting place constructed for the church in Gnadental. When he was elected deacon, it seemed like affirmation of things he had always done.

Father and mother also practiced their faith at home. Every day, before breakfast, a portion of the Bible

was read aloud and a lengthy prayer was spoken. Sometimes we made comments about the passage that was read. Prayers for other meals were shorter, but standing for all prayers was strictly observed. Since father was never ill and seldom away, the routine seemed constant, just like the rising and the setting of the sun.

Our home was the model of hospitality. Families newly-arrived from the Soviet Union were given accommodation, as were local families in difficult circumstances. Nobody in need ever left our house without some token of assistance—a meal or night lodging. Evangelists, such as C.N. Hiebert, C.C. Peters and Jakob Reimer stayed also. Other guests included beggars or travelling salesmen. All received the same hospitality.

For father, life was very serious, and he had little use for entertainment. Things of the world—radio, television, records, any music other than church music—were to be avoided. Worship had to be conducted in the German language. The radio became acceptable when Mennonite Brethren Communications began broadcasting Christian programs in German—but only for those select German-language programs. Just recently, he said to me, “I should have put more effort into learning English so I could follow sermons better today.” Mennonite Brethren Communications, Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services and Mennonite Central Committee were the recipients of the largest portion of his donations.

As I listened to my father and his friend pray, I was struck again by their absolute faith in God. They prayed for continued evangelism and gave thanks for a wonderful life in Canada. They prayed for the country's leaders.

They didn't complain about anything. Their prayer, and their visit, was filled with thanksgiving.

Jake P. Redekopp



Clockwise from the top: The Mary Martha Home for Mennonite Brethren working girls in Winnipeg; Anna Thiessen; Anna Thiessen with early sewing class, 1917 (?).



Anna Thiessen

Providing a Home Away from Home

Anna Thiessen was known to most as “Schwester Anna” or “Sister Anna” — a very appropriate name. She became a sister to around 2,000 young Mennonite women in Winnipeg from the 1920s to 1950s.

She emigrated from Russia with her parents, Jacob W. and Helena Thiessen in 1903 and settled in Herbert, Saskatchewan. She was a serious-minded young girl, who desired from childhood to become a missionary and serve God. She was only 23 years old when, in 1915, after studies at Herbert Bible School, she received an invitation to help with the Mennonite Brethren City Mission in Winnipeg.

Her six-month assignment extended to eight years, during which time she worked with the incoming German-speaking immigrant families — meeting them at the CPR station, helping them find their way in the city, teaching children’s Bible classes and ladies’ sewing classes, distributing clothing, visiting people and inviting them to the North End Mennonite Brethren Church.

The work for which she became well-known arose as established Winnipeggers came to the train stations in search of young immigrant women willing to work as live-in domestic servants. Most of the Mennonite families came from Russia with virtually nothing. With a travel debt to pay, they began to leave their young daughters in Winnipeg to work while they moved on to establish farms in the country.

Thiessen’s main work was shaping up for her. After spending two years studying English and theology at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, she returned to Winnipeg in 1925. She found that the Mennonite girls, some working for as little as \$3 to \$5 a month (besides room and board), were lonely in the city and



Clockwise from top left: Mary Martha Home fellowship meal; Anna Thiessen with some of her girls, 1919; the wedding of a Mary Martha Home girl.



that they had nowhere to go on their weekly half-day off. She invited them to meet at her two-room apartment. In time, Thursday afternoons at Anna's place meant rooms so crowded with visiting girls that the line went down the stairs. To accommodate them, she rented a third room, then a fourth, but soon even they were too small.

When she brought the situation to the attention of the Canadian Mennonite Brethren Conference, the Conference endorsed the purchase of a whole house where she could work full-time for the Mennonite working girls. Eventually a 16-room house at 437 Mountain Avenue became the destination for some 75 - 100 girls every Thursday evening. They sang together, visited, had a Bible study and shared the lunches they brought.

Thiessen's role was varied. In very little time she had found herself occupied as a full-time employment agent, a sister, and sometimes a mother to the girls. She kept the books and did the major part of the fund-raising to pay for the purchase and maintenance of the home. She put ads in the newspapers, provided accommodation for the girls as they waited for jobs and escorted them to their first places of work. At a time when there were few labour laws protecting domestics in Winnipeg, she looked out for the girls and often served as a mediator between them and their employers.

It was with much reluctance that parents let their daughters go to the city to work, and they were reassured only by the fact that there was someone there to look out for them. Thiessen encouraged the girls to develop ties with each other and with the North End Mennonite Brethren Church.

Her primary concern was that they have a "home away from home," so they would not become lost in the strangeness and the loneliness of the city. She defined "home" as a place where "order, industry, cleanliness and, primarily, love are found."

The name "Mary Martha Home" was chosen to

express the ideals of worship and service, which were certainly characteristics that she exemplified.

She had a stern, sober appearance, which people sometimes found rather formidable at first. But the warmth of her kind heart inevitably superseded that first impression. Women reminiscing about their time at the Mary Martha home remember that Anna was very straightforward and strict with them, but that she had a loving and kind heart and was always concerned about their welfare.

They recall her strong prohibitions against young men coming near the home to court any of the girls yet, when a girl was engaged, Anna was often first with the congratulations!

Anna's strictness paid off. The home had a reputation for providing honest, hard working, quiet and pleasant girls for domestic work, and the phone rang off the hook with requests for them. Girls who were teenagers or in their early twenties were basically running the households of wealthy and influential Winnipeg families—doing all the cleaning, cooking, serving, often the shopping, the mending and the sewing.

They often accompanied the families to their summer cottages for months on end where, in more primitive conditions, they continued to prepare the meals and to serve them while dressed in their immaculate black uniforms. In many instances they basically raised the families' children, having primary charge over their training and discipline.

Schwester Anna worked as the matron of the home until 1951 and continued her presence there until the home closed eight years later. She spent her last years in a nursing home, and even there, "her girls" continued to visit, sometimes bringing their lunches, as in the old days. She died in April, 1977 at the age of 85.

Frieda Esau



Clockwise from top: A photo of the Mary Martha Home girls, (c) 1930; a group of the Mary Martha Home girls with Anna Thiessen, 1927; Home girls in uniform, ready for work; Anna Thiessen in 1977.

At left: Early Mennonite farm scene, southern Manitoba; right, thanksgiving display in the Morden Church.



We, the Living, Praise

I

The most interesting people at a recent family gathering were several relatives who did not attend.

They were names, set at the centre of a large, hand-printed family tree: my great-grandparents, David and Katharina (Mandtler) Derksen, and on either side, two of their children, son David and Susanna Derksen and daughter Helene and Heinrich Harder.

Surrounding these two couples, in graceful, widening fans were the names of their children, their grandchildren, their great-grandchildren. Those outer circles represented us—the descendants who had come together to share a meal and some reminiscing.

Those people in the middle—what were they like? I wanted to know, for they are mine, my blood, my family. In them lay clues to the questions each of us asks: who am I, and of what significance is my existence? What is it that has shaped me?

I studied the family chart. To think that of eleven children born to that centre pair, only three survived to adulthood! Two of them immigrated to Canada, and because of that decision, I am a Canadian.

Embroidered handwork and dresser runners made of flour sacks with crocheted edging, cutlery, mugs fashioned from cannon shells, a coffee grinder, a charred enamel plate used for countless meals of fried potatoes—items that they made and handled—were admired and discussed. I peered at the stern, unsmiling faces of my forebears in the old black-and-white photographs,

and opened the faded brown book containing, in beautiful handwriting of the earlier German script, the briefly-kept diary of once-young Helene.

Then we listened to stories about these people, told to us by older family members. Great-grandfather Derksen, I learned, was astute in the business of farming. “Sell something every single day,” he advised, “even if it’s only a basket of straw.” And, although he did not part with his earned money easily, “nothing was too good for daughter Helene,” who was always well-dressed.

He discovered, as did many others during the years of war and revolution in Russia, that no earthly fortune is secure, however. One day he gave his grandchildren a box of his money, now virtually worthless, and told them they could use it for play!

Some of the recollections we hear are troubling. The marriage of our great-grandparents was “stormy;” he was a jealous and difficult man who drank too much. This is why, my mother explains, her parents resolved to be total abstainers. “It’s in the blood,” they insisted, “so we cannot even drink with moderation.”

And what of their spiritual condition? When asked whether she thought her father (my great-grandfather) died “selig” (saved), my grandmother would reply that this matter should be left to the Lord.

Great-grandmother was converted late in her life. She loved to read her Bible. While living as a widow with

Clockwise from the top: Margaret Suderman of Winkler leaving for India in 1947, Rev. Frank H. Friesen of Morden bidding her farewell; Helen Harder of Gnadenthal left for missions in India in 1946; the Heinrich P. and Helena Harder family of Gnadenthal and later of Winkler; the David and Susanna Derksen family of Boissevain. Derksen was a much-beloved itinerant preacher.



her son and his family, she was heard to request in her nightly prayers that "David might have a good resurrection."

My grandparents experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ as adults, and were baptized into the Mennonite Brethren Church. These decisions dramatically altered their lives; their new allegiances were very serious commitments. Nor did their faith shrink through the loss of their wealth, the death of a child, poor health, and long, difficult years of poverty in Manitoba.

Their trust in God exhibited itself in vigorous faithfulness to the work of God. Uncle David Derksen served as itinerant preacher and evangelist. Grandpa Harder assisted in the leadership of the Gnadenthal Church, and later, at Winkler. When Grandmother spoke of the Lord, it was "my Jesus."

Their decisions do not determine mine, but there is no doubt that they have influenced our family. We have been blessed because of the lives they led; because of them we have grown up in a community of faith.

But there is also this fact: they are dead. That reminds me of something the Psalmist said: It is not the dead who praise the Lord (Ps. 115:17).

II

It is we, the living, who extol the Lord (Ps. 115:18).

Like my parents and grandparents, my husband and I have decided to follow Jesus. We pilgrim in our specific milieu: a modern city, an on-going history that contains

the Meech Lake discussions and a SuperValu strike and a deadly tornado in Edmonton, the daily concerns of work and school and lessons, a summer of Mennonite Brethren conventions and talk of a name change for our Conference, the passage of the seasons. We worship in one of the 15 Mennonite Brethren churches in Winnipeg, the Valley Gardens Church.

Here, today, we are alive. Sometimes we are tempted with materialism and the love of ease. Sometimes we fear the future and are jolted into earnest prayer for our young children because of widespread immorality, the AIDS epidemic, and violence on this continent.

But this time and place is the one we are given. The wind of the Spirit does not disturb the graves of our ancestors or stir life from the dust of our great-grandparents, but moves now, in our hearts, sometimes to winnow and sometimes to comfort, but always to call us to praise the only true God, the one who has also chosen us.

Thinking about those names on the family tree prompts some speculation about future generations. Will my descendants also grasp at small links with us and gladly listen to anecdotes concerning us? Will they ask if we knew Christ and how that changed our lives?

Those questions bring me right back to the present. Those important people of my past are gone, and the future generations yet unborn. But I am alive to worship.

Oh God, today, receive my fervent, joyful praise!

Dora Dueck



Top: Senior folks' celebration at the Winkler Bible Camp, 1966; below: photo taken during evangelistic meetings conducted by George Brunk III in Winnipeg in 1957.



Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Memories

Mary's knitting needles poked their way forwards into new rows of stitches, while her mind, out of knitting gear because of the simple pattern, wandered backwards to the days when she was very young. It seemed to her, that she had always been Mennonite Brethren, long before she was baptized and received into the church.

She was Mennonite Brethren because her Mama and her Papa were members of that church. Papa was a preacher, often speaking from behind the simple, brown table in the school classroom turned into a meeting place on Sundays. But it was Mama who taught her about the church—the very best church, Mary was sure that anyone could ever belong to.

In Russia, that country of villages and orchards and bandits, which Mary had heard about so often but had never seen, Mama and Papa had been saved and had decided to join the new Mennonite Brethren church. For both parents it meant a second adult baptism and Mama told how this action had earned them derision, scorn and insults, even from close relatives and friends. Then things had become dangerous and they had come to Canada. Here in Canada things were so good—everyone could worship freely and live without fear. And now they were living about eight miles away from a very important church—the Mennonite Brethren church in Winkler, Manitoba.

Mary couldn't really understand why this church in Winkler was so important, but it was wonderful to go to Winkler with Mama and Papa and her sisters and brother on special occasions. On ordinary Sundays they went by buggy or sleigh to their own village school-church. Mary liked those times too, but going to Winkler, well—that made them all feel just as important as they knew the church was.

In summertime there were the conferences, held in the huge tent pitched on the yard, just behind the big, white church building. Mary was not really sure just why all these men met and what they were talking about, but she loved to watch them—all dressed up in suits and ties, in spite of the July heat. Best of all were the choirs; the pretty girls in the front rows, like so many summer flowers in their colorful Sunday dresses. And the boys! They too were in their best clothes, with unruly hair slicked down.

And one wonderful year, for the first of many times to come, there was Uncle Ben Horch! When he got up to lead the choir, he had to get up on a chair to get up on a table on which stood another chair. Uncle Ben got up on that second chair, but before he could start the choir, some gentlemen from the benches cautioned him about the danger of trying to be above everyone else! Mary loved to hear the quick response of chuckles and laughter after any such unprogrammed remark. Uncle

Ben laughed with them and then got the choir singing. What fun it was to watch this hand-and-arm-waving conductor! And how every member of the choir sang, just as if each one wanted to praise God very loudly!

There were also the wonderful quarter-year celebrations, held every third month on the first Sunday of that month, in the larger churches around Winkler. Mary got to know many other Mennonite Brethren from Morden, Kronsart and Grossweide. At these celebrations she also got to know who Uncle Johann Warkentin was. He seemed very old, but at one time he had been the leader of the Winkler Church. He was treated with great respect by all. He was also special because he had a daughter, Helen, who was a real-live missionary in India.

Then there was Uncle H.S. Voth—Mary never tired of seeing him. Sometimes he wore a smile, sometimes a very grave preacher-face, but always his long, greying hair, which curled at the ends, was combed straight back. To her he was soon to become Uncle Mission Board because he talked often about missions and about meetings he went to in an important place called Hillsboro, in the United States. Yes, Mary soon understood, that to be a real Mennonite Brethren meant to be a foreign missionary, or to stay at home to pray and to give, while others went out.

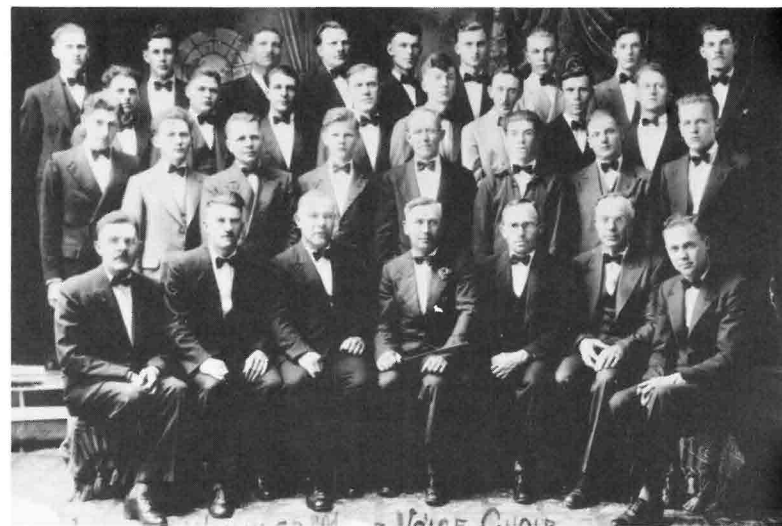
Mary very much enjoyed the social side of all this church life, too. It was fascinating to watch the women cook borscht in the huge black pots outside. That smell of borscht was enough to make the mouth want some now! Aunt Hooge and other strong women did not stand around waiting for the men to lift heavy pots—they heaved them around and set them in rows, ready to serve the guests when the last song was sung or the amen was spoken. And sometimes there was pie! That was a real treat, because at Mary's house dessert was seldom seen except on extra special Sundays.

Often, however, the meals at the celebration were very simple—big, soft Zwieback buns plus sugar cubes, with coffee or water to drink. And nobody seemed to notice or to mind when children took some extra cubes in their sweaty little hands, to be enjoyed later, maybe even during the next service, if it got too long.

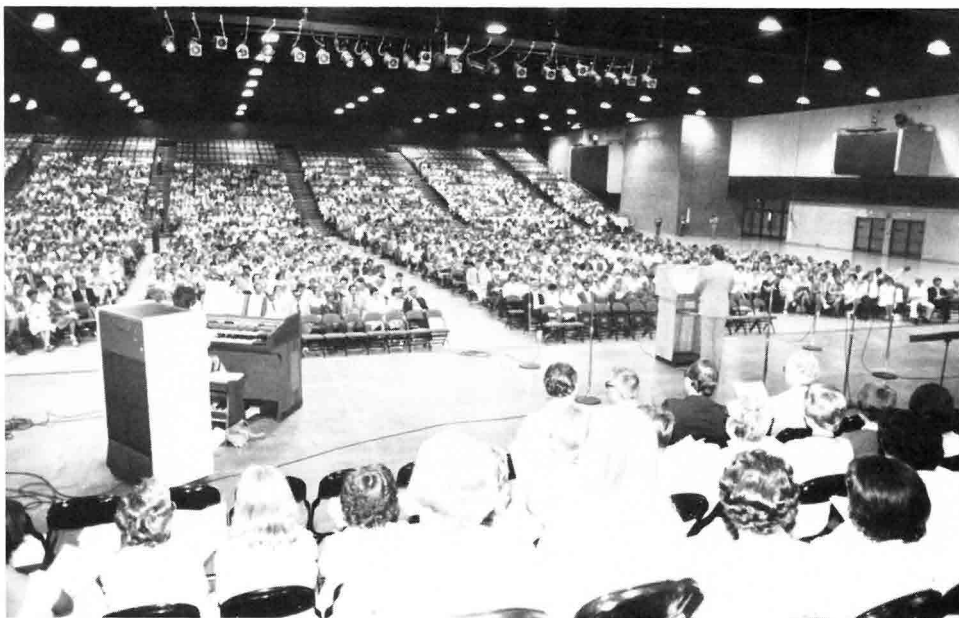
In those days Mary did not know about the argument in the book of James about faith and works. What she did know was that to be a believer and a Mennonite Brethren meant that you read the Bible and tried to do what it said—to be kind and to do good. She remembered how Papa often left the family for weeks in order to preach and to make home visits in other places. Mama seemed to understand that at times like that children needed something special. She would gather them around her and together they would make doughnuts or some other treat. And Mama also

This face from the film *And When They Shall Ask*, by Winnipeg filmmaker Dave Dueck, remained as one of the film's lasting memories. The scene was shot near Carman, Manitoba.





Clockwise from the top: The Mennonite Community Orchestra in the 1950s, Ben Horsch conductor; Winkler male choir, 1920s, K.H. Neufeld conductor (first row, centre); 1930 North Kildonan Church baptism; first Elm Creek church (right) and second church; Winkler songfest choir ('50s); Nettie Kroeker (r) being presented with a copy of the book she wrote, *Far Above Rubies*, from Christian Press printer Jim Friesen.



did much good—when visiting preachers came to the house to stay for a while, she would ask them whether they needed shirts or underwear washed. As if she did not already have enough wash with a family of eight! And there was the extra food she had to prepare—even tea at night, or a glass of milk and a cookie.

Mary learned to love those travelling preachers. They always seemed to like children and to pay attention to them.

Uncle C.N. Hiebert, with his stiff arm, played ball with them and helped bring in the wood for the woodbox. And Uncle Jacob Epp from Steinbach had such a hearty laugh that Mary was happy each time she heard that he was coming. Only Mama and Papa were not always very understanding—they sent Mary and the other children off to bed just when the stories were at their best! But even under the warm feather cover Mary could hear about the joys and problems of church work. And if she could keep her eyes open long enough, her ears would hear the prayers of the grown-ups before they went to bed.

Mary stopped her knitting and thought once again of how poor their family had been in those days. Other children had peanut butter and cinnamon buns for school lunches; they had plain bread with a bit of jam on it. And if extra dollars came in, Papa said it must go to pay for their immigration payment, whatever that was, and at such times, Mama agreed with him. However, in spite of all this poverty, Mary had somehow always felt rich—in fact, richer than others. Her family was part of the Mennonite Brethren Church—surely, that was the most important thing in the world. At age 9 she had invited the Lord into her heart and life, and at age 14 she had been baptized and received into the church. Then she had become, in the eyes of the people around her, what she had all along considered herself to be—a Mennonite Brethren.

Margaret Harder



Clockwise from the top left: Service at Winnipeg's Convention Centre during the 1972 Canadian Convention; a baptism group of the Morden Church, in 1982, George Braun the pastor; Frank C. Peters led the communion service at the 1980 Canadian Convention in Winnipeg; food service preparing to serve at a conference gathering in the North Kildonan Church.



William and Helen Bestvater



Building the Church in Winnipeg

The nurture and growth of the first Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg was considerably aided by capable leadership from the United States. One such leader was William Bestvater of Mountain Lake, Minnesota.

His brief eight-year ministry in Winnipeg was marked by love and concern and resulted in substantial growth for the congregation of German-speaking immigrants in Winnipeg's fabled North End.

Bestvater was born in Russia, in the Mennonite village of Alexandertal (New Samara), Russia on July 26, 1879. While still a young boy his father passed away. At the tender age of 15 he opted to live with his half-brother in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. He immigrated to the United States, where he completed his schooling and obtained a teaching certificate.

For a few years Bestvater taught school in several Mennonite communities in North Dakota and Minnesota. In 1900 he married Helena Janzen, who had also emigrated from Russia. They had six children.

Since the salaries of teachers were small, during the months when school was not in session Bestvater travelled from community to community selling Christian books, Bibles and pamphlets. Ample donations of food from his students' parents also helped.

Sensing a call to the pastoral ministry, he resigned from teaching and, together with his family, moved to Cleveland, Ohio where he attended Bible school. It was here that he became a life-long student of eschatological and dispensational exposition. Following a year's study, he returned to the midwest and served as minister, evangelist and Bible conference speaker in the Mennonite Brethren Central District Conference.

In 1912 they received a call for assistance from Canada. The small Mennonite Brethren congregation in Winnipeg, a bustling city of around 140,000, needed a pastor who was experienced in mission work. In October, 1913 they moved to Winnipeg where he became involved in a wide range of pastoral work,

serving as pastor of the small congregation and being responsible for all Mennonite Brethren mission activities in the city, which included holding street meetings.

He assisted immigrant families both materially and spiritually. He visited in homes and hospitals on a regular basis. In addition to all these heavy responsibilities, he helped organize and conduct the church choir and, on occasion, even sang solos.

While Bestvater was kept busy outside the home, Helena ran what amounted to a mini-hotel. Some months the family could count on one hand the number of meals they had eaten alone. In 1915 help arrived when Anna Thiessen came to assist in the mission, later serving as matron of the Mary Martha Home.

During the eight years of Bestvater's ministry the congregation steadily grew, and soon required the construction of a larger facility.

These were critical years for the young Winnipeg congregation. During the World War I anti-German sentiment ran high in the city, and a German-speaking congregation was vulnerable to abuse. However, the reputation of the congregation and Bestvater was good, and they were spared direct violence. In 1918 the influenza epidemic hit Winnipeg. It was a critical year; one in six in the city died. The small congregation was not spared, losing several faithful members. It was a time of much sorrow and the firm resolve of Bestvater was a comfort to the congregation.

Sensing a call back to teaching in 1920, the Bestvater's moved on to Herbert, Saskatchewan to teach in the Bible school there. He also became involved in itinerant ministry, both in Canada and the United States.

In 1930 they moved to California, eventually settling in Shafter, where he led the Mennonite Brethren congregation there. He continued his itinerant ministry well into retirement. He was preceded in death by Helena on October 7, 1960, and passed away on September 29, 1969.

Ken Reddig



Facing page, left: Helena and William Bestvater, first minister of the Winnipeg church; (r), the Winnipeg church's first choir, 1916, Gottlieb Wensel, longtime Sunday school superintendent (far left, back row), conductor William Bestvater (third from left, back row), Anna Thiessen (centre, middle row), and Bestvater's daughter, Anna Redekopp (far right, middle row). This page: Anna Thiessen with children's meeting at the Winnipeg church, 1916.

And On This Rock

In this promised land
Where are the great heaps of stone
raised by Mennonite patriarchs
For
When they shall ask?
Amid one hundred years of stones—
Head stones, corner stones, living stones, white stones
Mill stones,
Where are the altars of twelve unhewn stones
For
When they shall ask?

Poised between two tables of stone and
One Rock,
Do we give our children a stone or
A Rock
When they shall ask?
O Rock of All Ages, hewn without hands,
When You shall ask
May we have kept the stones
From crying out.
Ernest N. Braun



C.N. Hiebert

Bringing Salvation and Help to Many

Cornelius Nikolai Hiebert was born March 24, 1881, the sixth of twelve children born to Nikolai and Martha Hiebert. His parents had emigrated from Russia just six years before, and were living on a farm near Mountain Lake, Minnesota.

Pioneering was difficult, but Cornelius' early years were shaped by a warm and happy family life. At the age of 14 he confessed faith in Christ, was baptized and became a member of the Carson Mennonite Brethren Church.

Because of a teacher shortage in 1903, he was granted a permit to teach in a new settlement in North Dakota, despite the fact that he had only completed grade seven. Later, with another permit, he also taught in Minnesota.

At the age of 23, while doing farm work, he felt God talking to him in a special way. He knelt down beside the cultivator and dedicated himself to serve his Lord—in whatever way possible. In 1907 he became a colporteur, a travelling Bible salesman, for the British and Foreign Bible Society. He was able to go door-to-door, speaking to people about salvation.

He travelled to Medford, Oklahoma, where he met Tina Harms, a daughter in the home where he was staying. They were married in 1908, and had eleven children, two of which were still-born, and two of which died in infancy.

Because of his work as a Bible distributor and travelling evangelist, the young family moved frequently. They travelled through the American and Canadian midwest, from Fairview, Oklahoma to Waldheim, Saskatchewan.

He served as an evangelist with the Saskatchewan Mennonite Brethren conference, taking time to improve his theological education by studying for two years at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (Biola). In 1925 he was asked to come to Winnipeg to take charge of the Mennonite Brethren city mission there.

He led the church with enthusiasm, and had a profound effect on the lives of many. The arrival of Mennonite

Brethren emigrants from Russia brought many new members to the city, and also brought diversity to the group, with Kanadier (earlier immigrants), non-ethnic Mennonite Brethren and Russlaender (later immigrants) all worshipping together.

Hiebert shepherded this flock, spending considerable effort bridging the gaps between the various groups. He helped the new immigrants to find housing and employment, and collected clothing, money and bedding for them. He also collected money for the North End Chapel, the Mennonite Brethren meeting place that was completed in 1930.

Despite all of this work, his home was open to many with special spiritual needs. The hospitality of the Hiebert home was legendary.

Eventually, the responsibility became too great. Hiebert devoted his entire efforts to outreach, while others took care of the pastoring. They moved back to the U.S. in 1941, when he accepted a position as conference evangelist. After serving the conference he also served with MCC in Paraguay, and with Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services in Germany. His service in Germany led to the founding of the Neuwied Mennonite Brethren Church.

He retired in 1955, and the Hieberts moved to Reedley, California. Their home continued to be open to many. He was called home on January 27, 1975, at the age of 93.

Hiebert's dedication, his exhilarating joy in life, his determined efforts to bring salvation and help to many, coupled with his unquenchable humor, touched many lives. It's been estimated by one of his children that he conducted 57 weddings and baptized 253 people during his ministry.

His daughter and biographer, Esther Horsch, wrote that "his fascinating personality and captivating gift as a storyteller attracted all age groups." He used that gift to bring many closer to Jesus Christ.

H.T. Huebert

Top left: Taber Women's Fellowship at the North End Church, 1935; right, C.N. and his second wife, Helen Hiebert; below, C.N. Hiebert.





From top: Anna Thiessen with some of her Mary Martha Home girls during the '30s; a women's circle of the North End Church between 1936-38, led by (Mrs.) Elizabeth DeFehr and (Mrs.) Helen Hiebert; a union fellowship evening of the General Conference Mennonite Ebenezer Home (Edelweiss fellowship) and Mennonite Brethren Mary Martha Home (Tabea fellowship) girls at the North End Church in 1934.





Church and Community Life



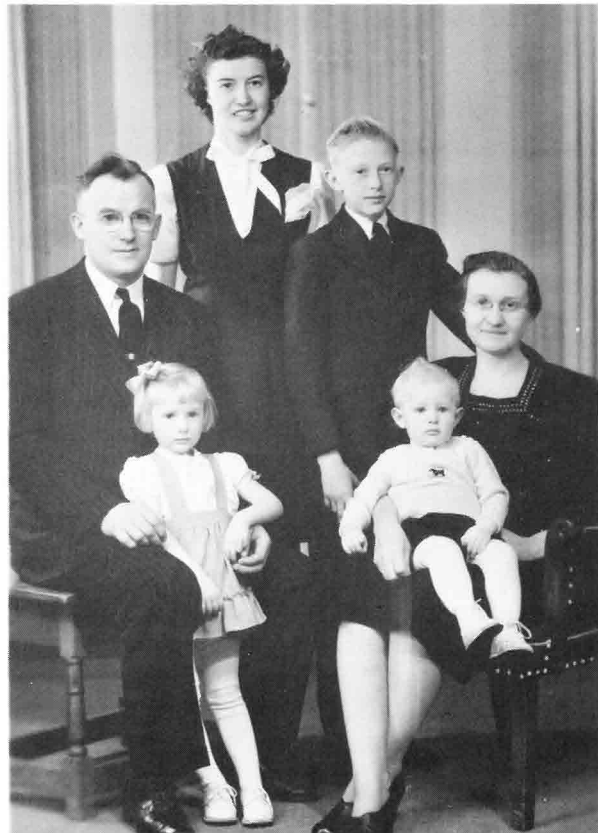


Facing page, clockwise from top left: North Kildonan Church 1986 Sunday school program; Bertha Klassen, Mennonite Community Orchestra musician and leader; MBBC/CMBC Oratorio Choir at Concert Hall, early 1970s; volunteer choir to honour conductor Albert Loewen, Steinbach Church, 1974; North Kildonan Church orchestra. This page, top: Winkler Church children with John Boldt, G.W. Peters and G.D. Pries, front; middle, left: early leader in children's Sunday school, Nettie Kroeker, with beginners class, 1940s; middle, right: Elm Creek Church choir; bottom: North End Church orchestra, 1942-43, a forerunner of the Mennonite Community Orchestra, (l-r) Hans Dirks, Anne Hiebert, Rudy Martens, Henry Shier, Menno Isaak, Ed Barkman, Ruth Buss, Mary Barkman and Bill Neufeld.



William Falk

Compassionate Concern for People



Top: The Gospel Light Church, where William Falk did much of his work; bottom, William and Anna Falk and their children, Mary, David, Herb and Erna.

William Falk was led by his Lord to serve Him in the city. In reminiscing with his family during his long, final illness, he described his first attempt at “taking his turn behind the pulpit”. He was able to cite text and outline of this sermon delivered before a small congregation at Melita, Manitoba.

This initiation in a rural community in the early 1930s marked the beginning of a life of service in the ministry of the gospel.

He was born April 30, 1904, to William and Anna Falk, in the village of Steinfeld, a part of the Chortitza Mennonite settlement in southern Russia. His father died when he was 13 and, as the oldest child, he assumed responsibility for the family. This left him little opportunity for education—a lack in his own life that made him very supportive later of his children’s interest in higher education.

In February, 1924, he married Helene Guenther, and they immediately left for Winnipeg, Canada. His independent nature had caused him to resist pressure to be baptized with his friends, since he had felt that he was not ready. After arriving in Winnipeg, he made his decision to become a committed follower of Jesus Christ in the basement chapel of the North End Mennonite Brethren Mission.

Several attempts at farming failed due to drought, floods, grasshoppers and the general economic depression. He recalled, with some humor, that he and his wife worked for 50 cents a day and that, as a result, they saw little future in farming. It was during this time that he preached his first sermon before that small congregation at Melita. That showed him the Lord’s leading to another field of work. At his sister’s funeral in Marquette the Lord led him to a meeting with C.N. Hiebert, the city missionary in Winnipeg.

In 1936 Falk accepted Hiebert’s call to preach at the College Avenue chapel, and he and his family returned to Winnipeg. While assisting the Hieberts, he enrolled in the Winnipeg Bible Institute, graduating as class valedictorian in 1939. Shortly afterwards he became director of city missions while Hiebert continued to provide support.

The Winnipeg city mission had opened in 1913 under the direction of Rev. and Mrs. W.J. Bestvater. In 1925 Rev. and Mrs. C.N. Hiebert joined them in this ministry. When the Falks accepted the challenge, the Lord showed them many new forms of outreach. At this time the mission was in a period of transition from a mission to Mennonite newcomers to Winnipeg



towards extension work among the various nationalities in the inner city. Falk was appointed the full-time city missionary.

Falk's compassionate concern for people stood him in good stead in his work. He spared no effort to serve people who did not attend church services. He visited the sick in their homes and hospitals.

He asked for and received permission from the CNR and CPR shops to conduct noon-hour meetings. With the assistance of a group of singers, Falk held services and handed out tracts. Meetings were also conducted at the Union Gospel Mission on Main Street. These were attended mostly by men—poor lost people standing around street corners and lanes. Refreshments were served following the message.

Falk and a male voice group also regularly visited Headingly Jail. He wrote in his report: "When a convict confessed his sordid life's story and accepted his long sentence with repentance and submission saying, 'I have found grace and forgiveness with God through the blood of Jesus Christ' we rejoice in the fruit of the Spirit."

Falk put much energy into the children's assemblies. When he arrived at a public school on Wednesday after classes, a circle of children would immediately gather. He opened his car doors and in jumped 10, 12—sometimes as many as 18 children. The children were from French, English, Ukrainian, German, Jewish and Native Indian backgrounds.

In 1949 the city mission, which for many years had been without a home, was located at a chapel on Logan Avenue. Falk named it "The Gospel Light Mission."

Another branch of his work was radio ministry. The faithful assistance of singing groups was significant in this work of the mission. In June, 1952, he ended his full-time service with the city mission but continued to serve on the committee and the Sunday morning radio service.

In 1953 the Falks accepted the pastorate of the North Kildonan Mennonite Brethren Church. Among the new challenges here were the building of a new sanctuary and the founding of a new congregation, the River East Mennonite Brethren Church.

A brief period of service in Morden in 1965 ended when his health gave way to cancer. During his illness he had time for quiet reflection with family and many friends. He went to be with his Lord on May 14, 1969.

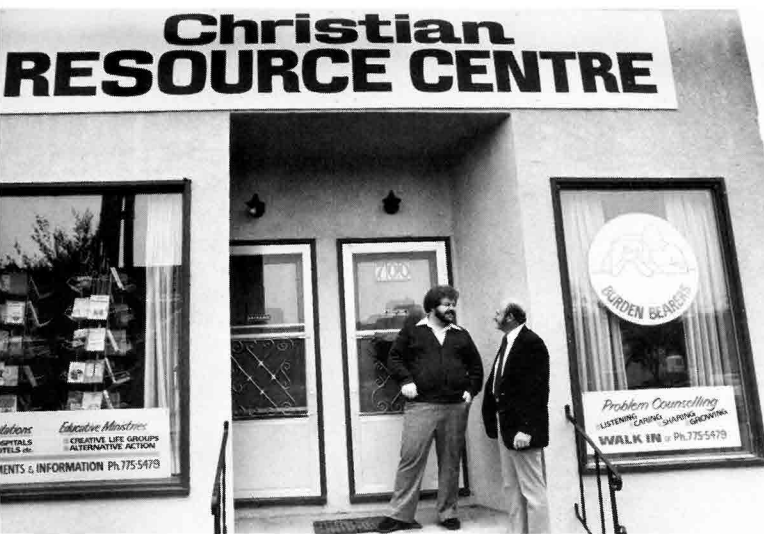
Ida Toews

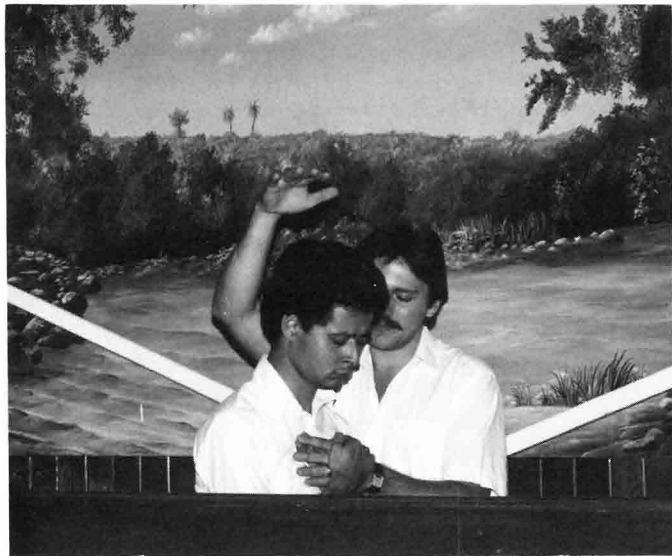
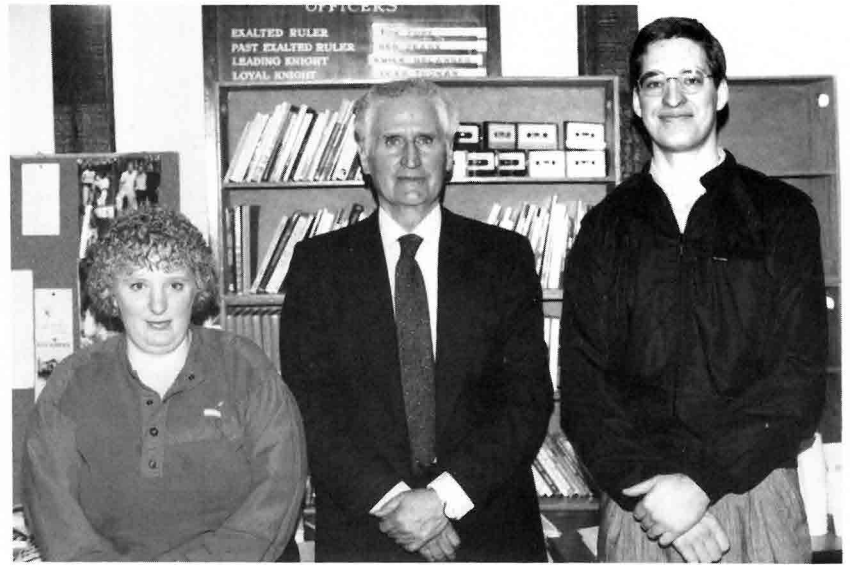
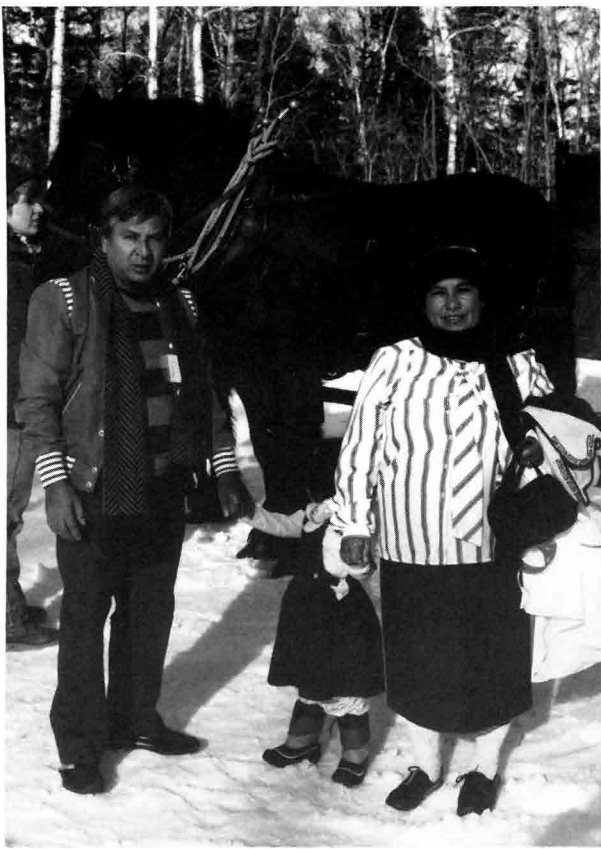


Clockwise from top: William Falk was for a time the speaker on the Gospel Light Hour; children of the Union Gospel Sunday school in which Mennonite Brethren teachers were involved, during the '50s; the William Falks with their friends, the C.N. Hieberts; a 1954 Christmas program in the Gospel Light Mission Church at Logan and Ellen in Winnipeg.

Home Missions

Clockwise from right: Christian Day Camps' staff and campers, Snow Lake, 1979; ordination of Ken Neufeld, director of Manitoba Missions and Church Extension, and wife Carollee, 1975; then chairman of Manitoba Home Missions Victor Adrian with Jake Buhler of Winnipegosis, 1966; John Quiring, for many years prison worker of Manitoba Missions and Church Extension; Cornerstone Christian Fellowship pastor Paul Patterson with then-director of Missions and Church Extension, James Nikkel.





Clockwise from the top: A Spanish Church couple, Felix and Zoila Estrada, at a Camp Arnes retreat, 1986; pastor Dick Neufeld of the St. Boniface Church with new members Darlene Dueck and Mark Frechette; the members of the Grace Church, Cranberry Portage, at a mid-'80s retreat; ordination of John Nikkel to ministry at Steinbach, 1982, John and Maryanne at left, pastor Jake Falk and Jessie at right, and Manitoba moderator Allan Labun, rear; Delbert Enns baptizes Ivan Cisneros, Spanish Church, 1986.





Top left: Joe and Marie Wiebe's church at Stuartburn, with home at the back of the church; top right: Joe and Marie Wiebe; middle: Joe Wiebe loading 18 children into car for VBS; bottom: home missions workers Abram Goerz and Jacob Friesen getting dinner ready.



Marie Wiebe

A Woman of Prayer

In the cloakroom of Eatons in Saskatoon, in 1935, young Marie Toews struggled with God about her future—should she stay at the store or quit and go to Bible school? Finally, she made her decision.

Kneeling in the corner of the room, she prayed—"I give in Lord—your will be done." She went to the manager's office and handed him her resignation. He did not accept it!

Instead, a short while later, he offered to send her to university to study home economics, at company expense. She graciously declined the offer, resigned and enrolled in Bible school. God's call had been too overwhelming.

Born April 1, 1912 on a farm near Steinbach, Manitoba, Marie was the tenth of 13 children of P.R. and Elizabeth Toews. After the death of her mother, when Marie was just 13, she became careless about church attendance and showed little interest in the Bible.

Her life consisted of parties, baseball games and moonlit rides with Joe Wiebe, star pitcher of the local baseball team. On the surface, life seemed satisfying, but she had a longing for something more. She discovered that something more at the age of 18 when she went to hear a travelling evangelist. She asked God to enter her life. A short time later, she moved to Saskatoon, and worked at Eatons for five years before God called her to attend Bible school in the city.

After graduation, Marie returned to Manitoba, married Joe, and together they served as church planters in the province, as well as a short time in Mexico. During the years there were both joys and hardships—joy in the many people they were able to lead to the Lord, and hardship in the form of many material needs as they struggled to feed a growing family and the many who continually found their way to the Wiebes' dinner table.





Clockwise from top: Sunday school under Esther Nickel at Clarkleigh; Jacob Epp of Steinbach and Abram A. Kroeker of Winkler visiting the mission church at Ashern and enjoying a lunch with the members there; a group of young people from Clarkleigh; Joe and Marie Wiebe with their grand-daughter and husband, Joanne and Gerald Hildebrand, also in church work; a group of baptism candidates from Clarkleigh who travelled 50 miles to Lake Manitoba to be baptized by Joe Wiebe.



But Marie was a woman of prayer and had learned to trust in God's providence. When the children were still very small she taught them to shout "Praise the Lord!" into the empty flour bin. God never disappointed them—the flour bin was always filled in time for the next baking!

When the girls needed new sweaters they prayed; wonderfully, the next mail brought the much-needed sweaters in just the right sizes. When the cow decided to wander, finding it hard to stay at home, Marie prayed, and the Lord kept the cow in the pasture for her.

As long as Joe was the pastor of a church, Marie was simply the pastor's wife; she neither knew nor sought any other role. She supported Joe in prayer, visited friends and neighbors with him, helped to counsel those who came to seek their guidance, and together shared the good news with everyone around them.

Although she never, in her many years in the church, appeared to have aspirations to hold office in any official capacity, or to play a leadership role of any kind, her influence in the church was far-reaching and effective. She was a marvelous storyteller, and used this gift to great advantage at informal gatherings as well as at formal church and conference meetings.

In later life she was much sought after as a speaker at women's meetings. She loved the Lord and she loved people, and she touched the lives of many hundreds in her lifetime.

Marie suffered a massive heart attack in spring, 1985. She never recovered. On April 12, 1985, she went to be with the Lord whom she served so faithfully for many years.

Hedy Durksen



Three Generations in Profile

A child, her father and grandfather were questioned separately about the impact of the Mennonite Brethren Church on their lives. Which values are transmitted from generation to generation? How is it being accomplished? What hope is there for the future?



Daughter Elise Redekopp (top); father Art Redekopp (below).



The Child: Elise Sigrid Redekopp

Q. Where and when were you born?

A. I was born in Winnipeg in 1976.

Q. Your parents and grandparents call themselves "Mennonite Brethren." What do you think this means?

A. It means that you don't do whatever you feel like doing.

Q. Why is that?

A. Because you know what is right and what is wrong.

Q. How do you know?

A. If you know Jesus, you just know right from wrong.

Q. How did you learn to know Jesus?

A. My parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles have taught me and I have learned during family devotions, Sunday school and church.

Q. Is there anything that has revealed God's presence to you?

A. Once my dog was missing for seven days. I was worried about her. I go to a Christian school, so I told my teacher and my class prayed that our dog would be found. That evening we got a phone-call from the dog catcher. She'd been found! I just knew God helped us to find her and this made Him real to me.

The Father: Arthur Bryan Redekopp

Q. Where and when were you born?

A. I was born in Winnipeg in 1950.

Q. In what ways was God's presence evident to you?

A. In my early years, in North Kildonan, I perceived God's presence through other people. My parents, teachers at Sunday school, German school and at the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute, and Camp Arnes counselors often touched me by who they were. They had two qualities in common. Evidently they had been called to a lifestyle that was separate. Consumption of alcohol and tobacco or going to movies and dances was frowned upon. Secondly, I sensed a sincere concern for my salvation.

Q. What value would you place upon having been raised in the Mennonite Brethren tradition?

A. The value of my upbringing could be summed up with one word—eternal. Exposure to the Gospel and Christians ultimately challenged me to make choices regarding my own future with the result that in my early twenties I gave my heart to Christ.

In December 1976, my wife and I were among the first group to be baptized into the fellowship of the McIvor Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church.

Q. In your opinion, what is important to the future of the Mennonite Brethren Church?

A. Above all we must focus on our spiritual heritage, diligently teaching our children those Scriptures which are the foundation of our beliefs.

The Grandfather: Henry William Redekopp

Q. Where and when were you born?

A. I was born in Zuworovska, Russia in 1913.

Q. Many young Mennonites are unaware of hardships faced by their predecessors in Russia. What circumstances were responsible for such adversity?

A. Following the Russian Revolution in 1917, the short-lived provisional government was deposed by the Bolsheviks (The Red Army). They, in turn, were challenged by the White Army who favored the Old (Tsarist) Regime. These factions engaged in a bitter civil war which lasted from the winter of 1917 to spring 1921. Russia was already ravaged by World War I, followed by revolution, and then Civil war. The nation was in a state of chaos. Law and order was non-existent. Russians were destitute.

Mennonites, because they were rather far removed from frontlines of the war and centres of revolutionary activity, remained somewhat isolated from some of the consequences. Many Mennonites were prosperous. Farms flourished, and there was plenty of food. Some owned factories and mills.

Success and their unwillingness to arm themselves made them a target for marauding robber bands who roamed the countryside during post-revolutionary anarchy. In one night of terror a village of eighty was exterminated. Homes were stripped of valuables. Men were dragged from their families, and never seen again. Eventually the southern regions where the Mennonites lived also became the focus of fierce battles between the Red and White armies. For example, control of the village of Waldheim is said to have changed eighteen times. If forced to retreat, armies often carved trails of violence into once peaceful villages. This is the world in which we lived.

Q. Are there any events which revealed God's presence to you?

A. There is one memorable event. We knew that the White Army was in retreat and approaching our village. Suddenly four soldiers appeared at our home. One grabbed my teenage sister and began molesting her. The rest of us escaped through a window while Father struggled, somehow managing to free my sister.

Together we fled to a neighbor's house, where we dropped to our knees in prayer for Father, who would



Henry W. Redekopp.

never use a weapon because of his faith. Later we learned how, unarmed, he struggled successfully to defend himself against intruders armed with spears and guns. This he attributed to unusual strength which God had apparently made available to him. The shouting of a superior with the news that their own enemy was upon them brought the encounter abruptly to an end.

Meanwhile, we had been watching from next door. First the men left quickly. We held our breath. Then Father came out unharmed! Miraculously, God had found a way to deliver us from an impossible situation. At this moment I caught a glimpse of the reality of God's presence, power, and willingness to help us. This made a profound and lasting impression on me and my faith was strengthened.

Q. From your youth, is there anything that would exemplify the impact of the Mennonite Brethren Church upon your life?

A. We arrived in Canada in 1924. When World War II began I faced compulsory conscription. The Mennonite Brethren stance of non-resistance requires that members object to military service involving the use of arms. I became a "Conscientious Objector," which required that I appear before a judge for examination. I was asked, "If someone tried to harm your family, what would you do?" I replied that, indeed, my family had experienced such an ordeal, recounting my father's refusal to use weapons even in the face of death. I perceived that this story had quite an impact on the judge, resulting in official recognition of my status as a Conscientious Objector.

Q. In your opinion, what is important to the future of the Mennonite Brethren Church?

A. I believe that the Mennonite Brethren Church must recapture the vision that many early members lived by. If we could recapture their dependence on God, their resolution to be the salt and light of the earth, and their dedication to holiness, then we would bring honour to God and help those younger members who are the future of the Church.

Marilyn (Gowryluck) Redekopp



Winkler Bible Institute



Clockwise from top left: 1929 Winkler Bible Institute (WBI) graduates, H.H. Redekopp, C.J. Funk (sitting), Frank H. Friesen; 1928-29 WBI students and teachers (second row, centre, l-r) J.G. Wiens, A.H. Unruh, G.J. Reimer, and school (inset); G.J. Reimer, teacher at WBI 1926-35 and 1945-49, officially opening new administration building, 1964; WBI after 1938 building enlargement; a 1928 class of four students with teachers (centre, l-r) G.J. Reimer, A.H. Unruh and J.G. Wiens.





Clockwise from top: The 1965 graduating class of WBI; the completion of the new WBI campus in 1964 and the dedication gathering; the 1955 graduating class of WBI, with teachers (l-r) John Boldt, G.D. Huebert, H.H. Redekopp, B.B. Boldt and John Goossen; the 1963 graduating class of WBI, with teachers (l-r) Allen Andres, G.D. Pries, John Goossen, Herman Lenzmann and John Froese.





Clockwise from top: The 1966 graduating class of Winkler Bible Institute; WBI faculty during the 1963-64 school year (l-r), Leonard Doerksen, Allen Andres, Herman Lenzmann, John Goossen, G.D. Pries and John Froese; the 1973-74 WBI student body; long-term teacher John Goossen was honored at the 1983 Manitoba Convention, WBI chairman Ron Peters was the presenter.





Top: Former WBI classroom building, used by the Winkler Church as an activity centre; middle: 1975 WBI graduating class; bottom: present WBI campus.



A.H. Unruh

Beholding God's Glory

In December, 1960, less than a month before he died, Abram H. Unruh preached his last sermon, the title of which was "We beheld His glory." In a life spanning 82 years, during which he was a renowned Bible teacher and preacher, Unruh saw the glory of God, and helped many others to see it, too.

Born in 1878 in the village of Temir-Bulat, which lay on the western coast of the Crimean Peninsula in Russia, Unruh was the third-youngest son of Elder Heinrich and Elizabeth Unruh (nee Wall). Two brothers, Heinrich and Cornelius, became missionaries to India. Another, Benjamin, became a prominent educator and university professor in Germany. A fourth, Gerhard, was ordained after emigrating to Canada.

Unruh was five years old when his father died, leaving a widow with ten children. Foster homes were found for several of the children. He went to live with his uncle Cornelius Unruh, famed Mennonite educator, who for thirty-two years served as principal of the secondary school in Ohrloff, Molotschna. Close to Ohrloff lay the village of Tiege, where Unruh completed elementary school. He then entered the Zentralschule (secondary school, roughly the equivalent of grades 9-11) where he studied for three years under some outstanding teachers, including his uncle Cornelius, who had studied in Basel and Moscow.

At the very tender age of 15, Unruh enrolled in a Mennonite teachers college at Halbstadt, Molotschna. After two years of teaching studies, he earned his Russian teacher's certificate. At age 17 he began his teaching career in the village of Menlertschik, in the Crimea, and his widowed mother came to live with him. Shortly after he began to teach he received the assurance of salvation and was baptized in the Mennonite Brethren Church in the neighboring village of Spat. It was in Spat that he met Katharina Toews and in 1900, when he was 22, they were married.

After teaching for eight years in Menlertschik, Unruh accepted a teaching position in Barwenkowo. During World War I he served for two years (1915-1917) in the Russian Red Cross, and then returned to Barwenkowo, where he was ordained. With the outbreak of the Revolution the Unruhs moved back to the Crimea,

Abram H. Unruh



where he served as the head of the secondary school in Karassan. The Unruhs now had four sons and two daughters (a son and a daughter had died in infancy while they lived in Barwenkowo).

In 1920, Unruh was asked to join the teaching staff of the Tschongraw Bible School, which had been established in the Crimea in 1918 under the leadership of former missionary Johann G. Wiens. When the Soviets closed the school in 1924, the Unruhs left for Canada, arriving in Winkler, Manitoba, in January, 1925.

In the fall of 1925, Unruh began his Bible teaching ministry in Winkler. Several of his former colleagues from Tschongraw joined him and, out of their efforts, the Winkler Bible Institute emerged. For 19 years Unruh led the school and, through the graduates, the churches across Canada were strongly influenced. As more Bible schools sprang up, the Canadian Conference decided to establish the Mennonite Brethren Bible College to train teachers for these schools. Unruh became the founder of the College, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. When the College began in a large facility with few students in 1944, Unruh quipped that God had made a big world and, without embarrassment, had placed only two people into it.

Unruh wore a number of hats in his life-time. Although he was first and foremost the teacher, he was also a powerful expositor of the Scriptures. Churches throughout Canada and the United States were influenced by his preaching ministry. He also had administrative gifts. Not only was he principal of the Winkler Bible School and founder of MBBC, but served as moderator of the Canadian Conference. He also sat on the Board of Tabor College, in Hillsboro, Kansas, and for years was a member of the Board of Reference and Counsel of both the Canadian and the General Mennonite Brethren conferences.

God had blessed Unruh with a strong constitution and a great capacity for work. In practical matters (at which he was not very adept), he had the support of his beloved wife Tina, who looked after his clothes, put on the storm windows and shoveled the snow. He was a deeply devout man, but that did not keep him from enjoying life—he also had a great sense of humor.



Faculty meetings at times became longer than necessary because of the hilarious stories he had to tell.

After ten years at MBBC, the Unruhs retired to Chilliwack, B.C., where their youngest daughter, Lydia, lived.

Unruh had a great gift for communicating biblical truth. Theologically, he was largely a self-taught man. Through wide reading and diligent study he kept his mind fresh, and warned his fellow-ministers that they could not prepare a meal for their churches if the cupboard was bare. Bethel College in Newton, Kansas, recognized his gifts and his contribution to the wider Mennonite community by awarding him an honorary doctor of divinity.

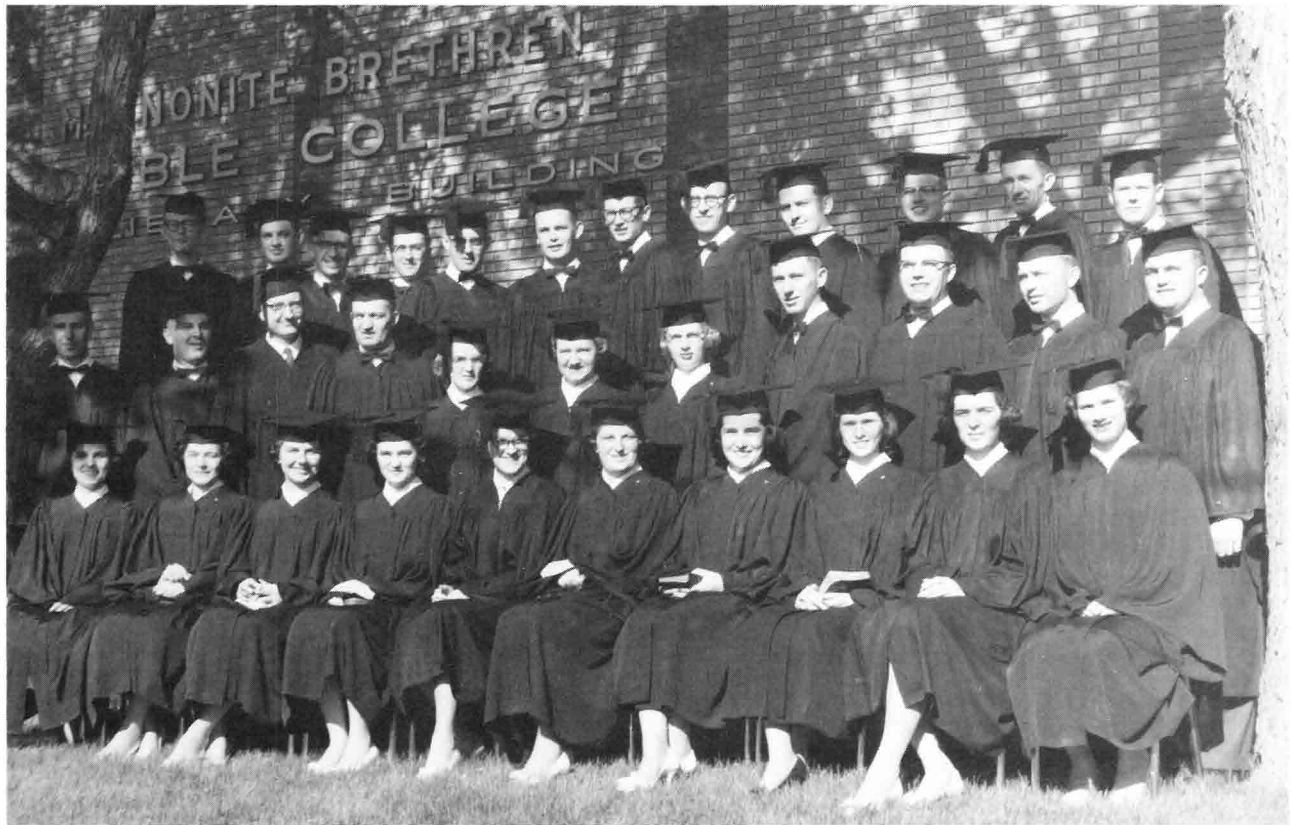
When the Mennonite Brethren celebrated their centennial in 1960, Unruh would have loved to attend the celebration in Reedley, California, but he was not well. He took satisfaction in the fact that he had written the history of the Mennonite Brethren Church (Die Geschichte der Mennoniten Brudergemeinde). He had lost his eyesight due to diabetes and had to memorize his sermons. On one occasion he began his sermon by telling the audience to keep on sleeping because he could not see them anyway. Naturally, they were then awake. On one occasion he made the comment that he had to suffer from diabetes because he had been too sour in his life.

On January 6, 1961, he collapsed just as he was about to preach a New Year's message in Clearbrook, B.C., and died on January 15, at the age of 82. The title of his last sermon, preached on December 26, 1960, was "We Beheld His Glory." His hope of sharing the glory of God is now being fulfilled.

David Ewert



Top: First MBBC building, purchased in 1944; middle: MBBC Ministers' Course, late 1950s; bottom: MBBC leaders at the Elmwood Church ground-breaking, 1952, illustrating close ties between the College and the Elmwood Church.



Clockwise from top: Interaction at a 1976 minister and laymen's institute at MBBC, J.B. Toews and Pierre Wingender in foreground; Howard Loewen, now teaching at the Biblical Seminary, Fresno, receiving his MBBC diploma from Victor Adrian in 1967; the 1960 MBBC graduating class; David Ewert and Harry Olfert survey the site of the new College/Conference building in 1984.

Mennonite Brethren Bible College



Clockwise from above: 1979 MBBC opening service; MBBC library and music building; women's dormitory and dining hall, administration/classroom building, before remodelling; 1946 student body; 1980 MBBC graduates.





First Manitoba Mennonites

A.A. Kroeker

A Man of Unique, Wide and Useful Interests



He has been called the Johann Cornies of the Manitoba Mennonites. An exaggeration, perhaps, but like the Russian agricultural pioneer of a century earlier, Abram Arthur Kroeker also made a lasting impact on both the agricultural life of his community and the spiritual vitality of his people.

He was born Dec. 6, 1892 on the site of what is now Winkler, Man. His parents were members of the first Canadian Mennonite Brethren congregation, near Burwalde. At the age of 13 Abram was baptized on the confession of his faith and joined the church and a larger fellowship to which he would make extensive contributions in the areas of agriculture, Christian education, home missions, music and camping.

Professionally he was a teacher, businessman and farmer. After a short time as a schoolteacher he joined his brother in operating a general store and harness shop in Winkler. From 1920-22 he and his wife, Elizabeth, took a leave of absence to attend Reuben A. Torrey's Bible Institute of Los Angeles (now Biola). After graduation he returned to the Winkler business, later switching to farming.

Unhampered by the baggage of tradition, the new farmer was willing to experiment. Kroeker pioneered balanced crop rotations in southern Manitoba and successfully introduced corn, one of the first row crops. A corn kiln drying system he adapted to local conditions in the 1930s was widely copied and became the foundation for a successful industry in western Canada. He expanded Manitoba's agricultural base to include potatoes, now a major industry in the province.

While the secular world bestowed numerous honors for his agricultural leadership, the pivot of Kroeker's MB Conference work was Christian education. His chief contributions were natural extensions of his long association with Winkler Bible School. He was a prime mover in its founding in 1925 and in the retention of A.H. Unruh as its leader. He himself taught there from 1929-1944.

As a trainer of students for Sunday school teaching,

Kroeker believed Sunday school curriculum and methods should be tailored to the particular capacity and learning characteristics of each age group. As a result of his active promotion, age graded Sunday school lessons were eventually adopted by the conference.

This required separate classrooms, and Kroeker began urging churches to build education wings. The Elmwood and North Kildonan congregations, in both of which he was once a member, were some of the first churches to build such facilities.

In time these involvements, along with his chairing of the Canadian Conference Sunday School Committee from 1942-56, earned him designations such as "Mr. Sunday School" and "the father of MB Sunday schools."

Seeing empty schools during Manitoba summers as an additional opportunity for the Christian education of children, Kroeker initiated Vacation Bible Schools in many school districts, a concept that grew and has endured to this day.

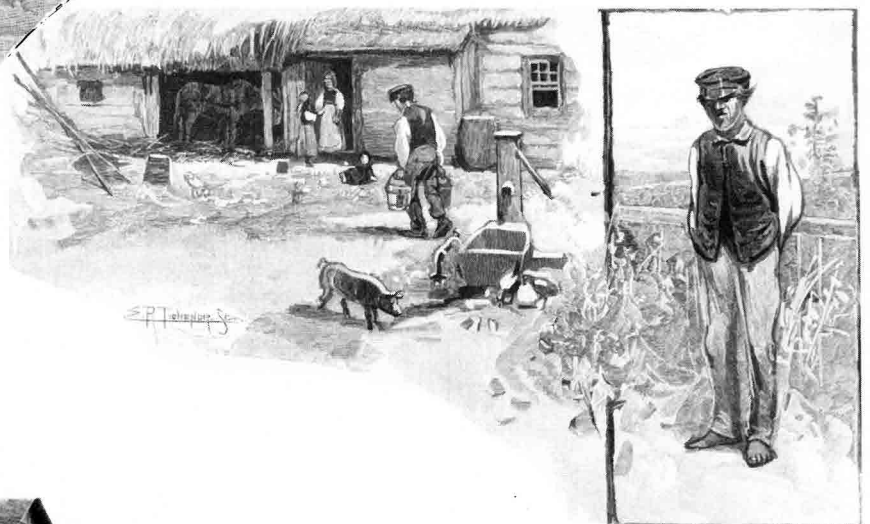
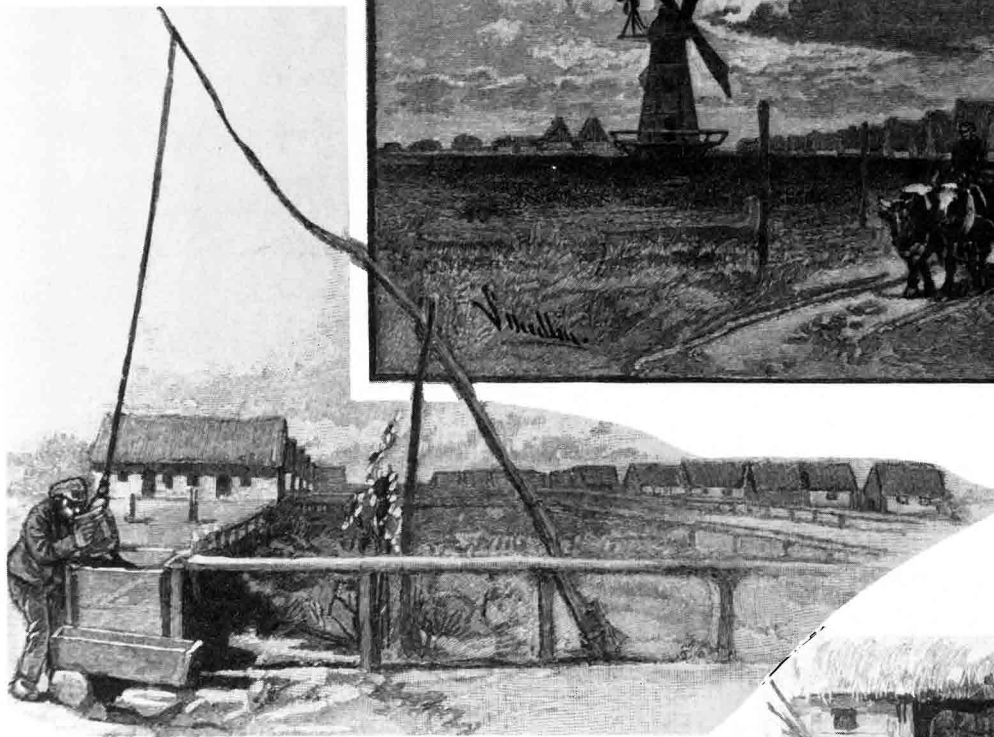
He was one of the prime movers in the establishment of Camp Arnes, which began operating on Lake Winnipeg in 1949 and currently ministers to thousands of people every year. He was also a key player in the expansion of the Manitoba MB home missions program.

As Esther Horch has written, Kroeker also "furthered trends in the development of music in the Mennonite communities in Canada." He was "an ardent supporter of music workshops held all over Canada in Mennonite communities, and in 1944 his influence led to the creation of a youthful Mennonite Symphony Orchestra."

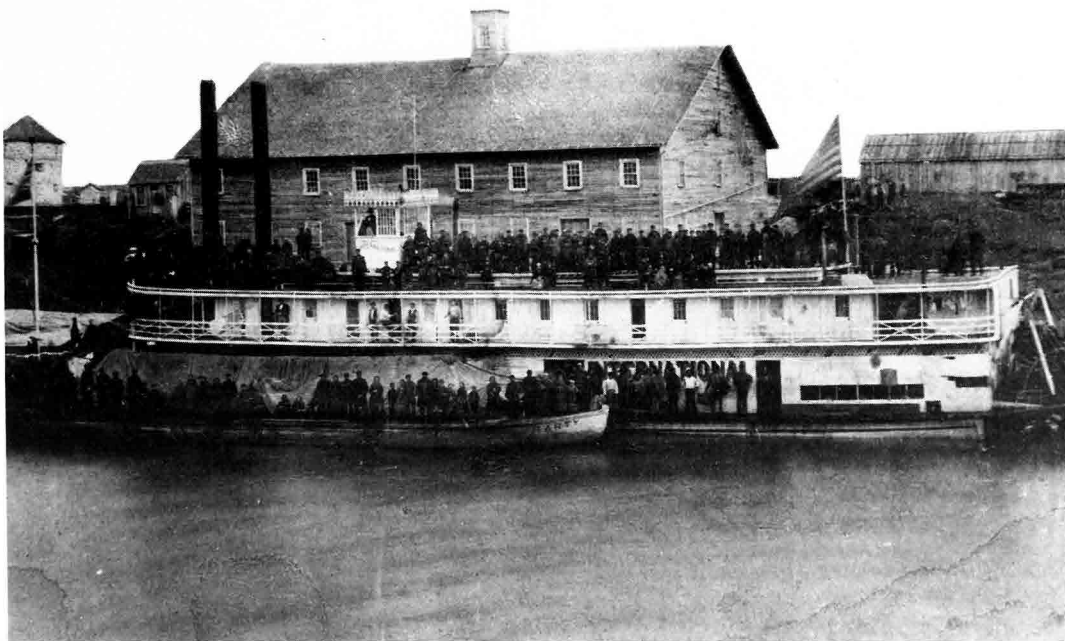
In both agriculture and church work, Abram Kroeker was known as a motivator and entrepreneur, a man of vision not bound by tradition yet firmly committed to the fundamentals of the faith. He had a unique ability to recognize opportunities, accept challenges, impart his insights and infect those about him with his irrepressible enthusiasm.

Abram A. and Elizabeth Kroeker, above and below.





From top: Early Mennonite village scenes in southern Manitoba; The International, paddlewheel steamer on which the first Mennonites arrived in Manitoba in 1874.





C.A. DeFehr



A Broad Vision for Church and World

The furniture dealership bearing his name still thrives on Princess Street in downtown Winnipeg, as do the church institutions he helped establish across the Red River along Henderson Highway. MBBC, MBCI, the Christian Press and Elmwood MB Church are just a few that carry the distinctive stamp of C.A. DeFehr. They reflect the broad vision of a man who straddled the worlds of business and church in a way few others have.

Even in his childhood in the village of Einlage, Ukraine, Cornelius Abram DeFehr (1881-1979) wanted to be a businessman. In 1904, a year after he married Elizabeth (Liese) Dyck, he moved to Millerovo and with two partners opened a factory to make agricultural machinery, oil presses and wagons. For 15 years the business flourished, but in the upheaval of the Russian Revolution he was forced to give it all up and flee to the Kuban area of the Caucasus.

During these refugee years he became more deeply involved in the Mennonite Brethren Church he had joined at the age of 19. He directed the MB church choir in the Kuban, served as a representative and counselor to Kuban conscientious objectors (1919-24), and from 1922-25 distributed aid to the starving in the Caucasus for American Mennonite Relief, forerunner of Mennonite Central Committee.

His 1925 emigration included a detour that DeFehr in true entrepreneurial fashion turned to advantage. During a stopover in Germany for eye treatment, he made arrangements to distribute German-made cream separators and hardware on consignment when he arrived in Canada. What then began as a travelling sales route in Southern Manitoba blossomed into a thriving Winnipeg dealership with diversified product lines and branches in several western Canadian cities.

The prosperous business, subsequently operated by his sons, freed him to give generously of his time to church causes.

His greatest love was inter-Mennonite relief and resettlement programs. For 20 years (1940-60) he served on the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, which sent him to Paraguay four times to help resettle several thousand Mennonite refugees from Europe. He and his wife embarked on their first such trip in 1947, staying almost a full year. Two months later they returned for another nine-month stint.

DeFehr was remembered for his ability to identify with the refugees' circumstances. Unlike some visiting representatives, he and his wife lived in tents like the other refugees during this time. When the South American immigrants were carving out a new life for themselves, DeFehr, despite his relatively advanced age, gamely wielded the axe and pulled the saw, encouraging others by his example.



Top left: C.A. DeFehr; top right: two leaders in the WW2 aid to Mennonite refugees, C.A. DeFehr, centre, and J.J. Thiessen of the General Conference Mennonite Church, and Albert DeFehr, grandson of C.A. DeFehr, at 1973 MCC annual meeting; bottom: Elizabeth DeFehr.



His other involvements read like a Who's Who of church causes, ranging from the MB city mission and Mary-Martha home in Winnipeg to the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, Man.

He was a prime mover in establishing the Mennonite Brethren Bible College and the adjacent MB Collegiate Institute. He was responsible for the purchase of the original Bible college site and supervised the construction of Eben-Ezer dormitory, later renamed the C.A. DeFehr Residence in his memory.

DeFehr was treasurer of the Canadian MB Conference from 1944-60 and chaired the board of the Christian Press from 1945-60, another institution he helped establish. His home congregation, Elmwood, also bears his imprint. He donated the land on which it was built, as well as planned and supervised the construction of the building.

He was known for his wide scope of ministry, his keen vision for the church, and his willingness to serve behind the scenes without public recognition. "World needs to me were the windows in the church fellowship," he once said. "Reconstruction for me meant the repair of church and school buildings."



Clockwise from the top: Leadership of C.A. DeFehr and Sons in 1946, C.A. DeFehr, Abram DeFehr, William DeFehr, B.B. Fast and Cornelius DeFehr; C.A. DeFehr at groundbreaking of the Elmwood Church, with contractor Mr. Miller; grandson Bill Fast (right) is the president of a major windowmaking firm, Willmar Windows.



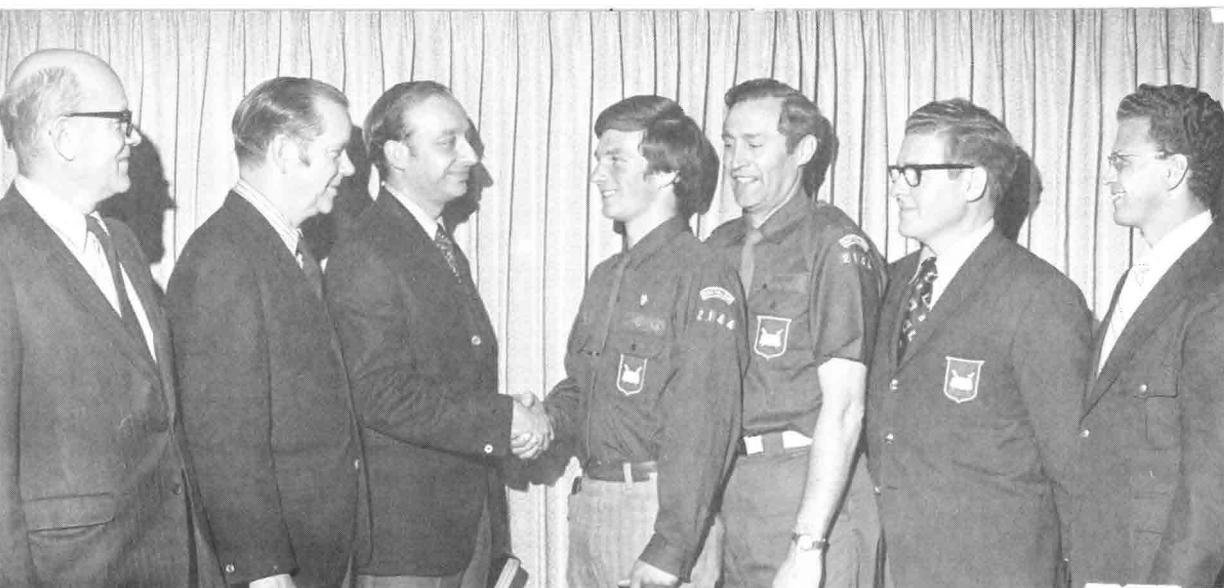
Church Life



Clockwise from the top left: Last service at the old Elm Creek church; present Elm Creek church; Brooklands church site; Brooklands church; building addition to Brooklands church, 1983; Elm Creek baptism.



Clockwise from the top left: Commissioning service for Shirley and Michael Young to ministry in the South Park Church, Altona, with James Nikkel and Jack Hoeppner; the Portage Avenue Church meetingplace, exterior and interior; groundbreaking for the Portage Avenue church, 1960, J.P. Neufeld turning the sod; David Redekop welcomes Albert and Lorna Baerg as pastoral couple to Portage Avenue Church, 1986.



Clockwise from left: George Toews of Portage Avenue Church receiving the Herald of Christ award, Christian Service Brigade's highest award, 1971; Niverville Sunday school class, late 1960s; boys club at the McIvor Avenue Church; McIvor Avenue pastor Allan Labun leading a baptismal class; River East MOMs (Morning Out for Mothers) activity.



Clockwise from right: South End Church Sunday school workers, 1950s; drive-in service at the Northdale Shopping Centre, put on by River East Church, Winnipeg, 1969 (the services ran a number of years); new members, Newton Church, 1984; new members, Fort Garry Church, 1985; River East drive-in service, 1969.





Helen Litz/Mennonite Children's Choir

Lift up the Voice with Joy



Clockwise from top: The Mennonite Children's Choir singing at a worship service preceding the 1981 opening of the Manitoba Legislature, Premier Sterling Lyon in front seat; conductor Helen Litz, founder of the Mennonite Children's Choir; the Mennonite Children's Choir singing with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

At the end of a children's choir festival, a young choir member, eyes wide with wonder, exclaimed to Helen Litz, founder and conductor of the Winnipeg Mennonite Children's Choir, "Wow—you were a good constructor!"

She received the compliment with a smile, and smiled again when she shared the remark with her husband, Albert, owner of a construction firm. "What a neat compliment—I'm a constructor too!"

Helen Litz has indeed been a constructor, building the nationally-acclaimed Children's Choir. With perseverance and enormous energy, she has given her life to music, to children and to the church. She has constructed not only moments of exquisite music, but has been instrumental in building the lives of people.

Born in 1932, the daughter of Edward and Elizabeth Wilms, she grew up in Winnipeg's north end and, with her family, attended the North End (now Elmwood) Mennonite Brethren Church. Musical memories from that time include the "profound influence" of the church choir, directed by Ben Horsch, and Sunday school singing with Jacob Wedel. The texts and tunes of the German songs she learned back then, and still cherishes, still come back to her.

The Winnipeg Mennonite Children's Choir was born quite by accident. Litz, the music teacher at Lord Kitchener and Princess Margaret schools, was asked to provide a choir for a German Day concert at Rainbow Stage in 1957. She combined her school choirs and the Elmwood Mennonite Brethren Church Sunday school choir to perform at the concert. The choir has never disbanded.

With its distinct, clear sound, the choir was an instant success. The choir performed at concerts in Winnipeg



and surrounding area and, within two years, was on the road, singing its way across western Canada and the mid-western United States.

By the mid-sixties, the choir was appearing on the international stage, performing at competitions in England, Switzerland and Germany—and winning.

In the 70s, the choir travelled to Norway, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and France. Today the choir is a musical ambassador for Canada. It receives around 30-40 invitations annually to sing in Canada and internationally.

The choir's motto is "God is my song." After hearing the choir, it's obvious that the motto isn't a token acknowledgement, but at the heart of the choir's purpose. "God has graciously used us, despite my shortcomings," she says.

From the beginning, she developed the choir as an instrument of faith. "I feel that my work is something I can give back to God, as well as giving joy to people," she adds.

She is blessed with enthusiasm and vitality. "Some of us relax by working," she says. "When I'm making music, I'm living!" Although her home and three children have always been a priority, she has also found extra energy for music.

Besides the children's choir, she does guest conducting and festival work, sings in the Portage Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church choir and has served on the church and provincial Mennonite Brethren conference music committees. She believes that Mennonite Brethren have a wonderful musical heritage—a heritage that we must not neglect. As a singing church, she shares, we have been able to provide a unique witness for Christ.

Her goal over the past years, and for the future, is to "strive for excellence" in everything she does and to encourage the development of musical gifts so that church members can "lift up the voice with joy."

Dora Dueck



Clockwise from the top: The Gospel Light Hour children's broadcast choir, Frieda Duerksen, conductor, early '60s. The choir produced radio programs for many years; 1950s Gospel Light Hour children's choir; children's Christmas program at Grace Church, Cranberry Portage; children of the Spanish Church, Winnipeg.



From left: Members of Irmgard Epp's immediate family, including her aged mother, centre, at her retirement from teaching; Irmgard Epp.

Irmgard Epp

A Life of Dedication to Education

Even before Irmgard Epp started school, she decided that she would become a teacher. And she did. For thirty years she was teacher and principal in the Winnipeg School Division. Her dedication to Christian education in the church was just as strong, and she was committed to some part of the church's program throughout her life.

Her family moved from her birthplace in Fiske, Saskatchewan in 1938 to North Kildonan in Winnipeg. Irmgard was baptized at 16 and joined the North Kildonan Mennonite Brethren Church. Two years later she began teaching Sunday school.

During World War II, North Kildonan was settled by people of a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds, including some displaced Japanese. In the early 1940s, several church members began Sunday afternoon Bible instruction for these children. Irmgard was one of the long-term workers, teaching classes and conducting singing.

It was not easy persuading parents to send their children to these services. Home visits were made each fall to recruit students, and additional activities, such as a weekday girls club, supplemented the Sunday classes. But the ministry, known as the North Kildonan Mission Sunday School, was rewarded. It lasted for about 20 years and saw enrollments of close to 100 children each year.

Since the regular North Kildonan Church services were conducted in German and since many members could not speak that language, it became obvious that another church would have to be established for English-speaking attenders. This led several concerned people in the early 1960s to begin services in a school, which in time resulted in the formation of the River East Mennonite Brethren Church.

Irmgard was one of the group's founding members, and

she participated energetically in its organization. As a Sunday school department leader she had a devotional time with the children that always included lively singing.

Over the years she was a member of the church council, the Christian education committee and, for a short while, Sunday school superintendent. She also sang in the church choir, took an interest in the library, and helped decorate the sanctuary.

Her keen interest in missions took her on several visits to family members overseas, and she carried on an active correspondence with missionaries. She gave generously to missions and other causes. One of her last commitments was teaching a women's Sunday school class which was most satisfying to her and stimulating for her students.

In 1976, Irmgard was elected to the Manitoba Board of Educational Institutions to serve on the MBCI board. In 1979 she was re-elected and spent one year as board chairperson, the first woman to have this position. But ill health gradually forced her to give up committee work. After a five-year battle with cancer, she died on January 6, 1983.

One of her friends described her as having a "vibrant interest in living—she worked to give, not to receive." She was able to carry out ideas and programs with vigor and determination. Her classes were always well-prepared. When she had a position of responsibility she did her homework, was punctual, and attended all meetings. She was not sentimental, and was sometimes called on, by virtue of her position, to exercise authority in difficult situations.

At her memorial service, one of the Japanese "mission boys," by now a young doctor, stood respectfully silent. He was a tribute to her life of dedication to all aspects of education.

Neoma Jantz



Clockwise from top left:
Building the new MBCI addition,
1973; new addition nearing
completion; 1963 General
Conference sessions held in
the MBCI auditorium; MBCI
chapel service, at right former
principal Peter H. Peters;
1973 MBCI graduates.

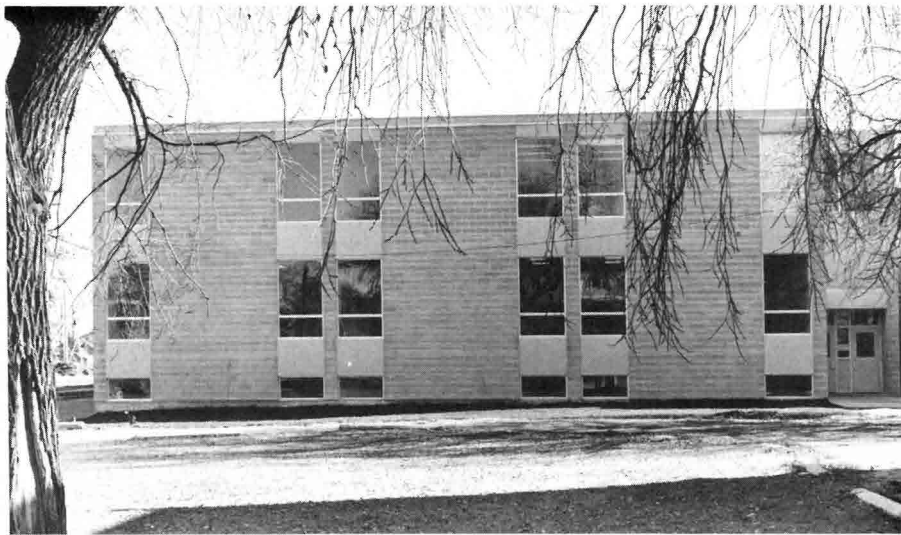


Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute



Clockwise from top: The Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute from Talbot Avenue; a world concern poster done by Carolyn Hamm; a building fundraising banquet for the MBCI in 1973, J.A. Toews the special speaker; students of the MBCI with teacher Ken Reddig sharing results of a survey on Sunday business openings with Premier Edward Schreyer, early '70s.





Clockwise from top left: A 1959 graduating class of the MBCI, with teachers l-r, third row, Henry Dick, Gerhard Peters, John Thiessen, Henk Visch, Henry Letkemann, and Henrich Regehr; addition to MBCI constructed in 1973; budding musicians of MBCI, Hans Boge, Conrad Dueck, Peter Martens and Julian Regehr; the 1987-88 MBCI Concert Choir at the Christmas program, Peter Braun, conducting and Lisa Warkentin accompanying; the grades 7 and 8 choir, Peter Braun conducting and Vernon Regehr at the cello; the MBCI freshman boys playing Miles Mac, Ralph Wagner coaching. The team is one of the best in the province.



James and Rebecca Young, pastoral couple to the Chinese/Vietnamese Mennonite Church and later the Chinese Mennonite Brethren Church.

Chinese Mennonite Brethren

Thank God that He is with Us

Take a Christian from Vietnam, mix in church-sponsorship of Vietnamese refugees, put them all in Winnipeg and before you know it, Mennonite denominations and Mennonite Central Committee are doing something they've never done in Manitoba before—planting a church.

The Christian from Vietnam was James Young, who grew up in a Christian family in Saigon and went to Bible college in that country. At the end of the Vietnam War he emigrated to Canada, arriving in B.C. in 1979. In 1981 he joined the Westwood Mennonite Brethren Church in Prince George, B.C. with his wife, Rebecca, to serve the almost 500 Vietnamese refugees then living in the area. Their ministry was sponsored jointly by MCC B.C. and the Westwood Church.

At Westwood, the Youngs served people who were poor, having difficulty adjusting to life in Canada and carrying terrible memories of life in the refugee camps. While there they conducted an afternoon worship service, did counselling and assisted with school registration, health services and employment search.

In 1982 a downturn in economic conditions in Prince George caused many of the refugees to leave the area, and the Youngs moved to Manitoba to study at MBBC. When MCC Manitoba learned about their plans, they invited them to begin a similar ministry to Vietnamese refugees in Winnipeg.

The idea of a church for the refugees sponsored by Mennonite church members in the city grew out of a feeling that while the churches had helped the new Canadians physically, they had done very little spiritually. For refugees who spoke Chinese, there were

several church options; for those who spoke only Vietnamese, there was no church to attend.

James studied half-time and organized the church with the rest of his time. In April, 1983, the group began meeting at the Salem Mennonite Brethren Church and later moved to the more centrally-located Home Street Mennonite Church. MCC Manitoba, with support from the Mennonite Brethren, General Conference Mennonite, Evangelical Mennonite Mission and Evangelical Mennonite conferences, supervised the creation of the new church. In December, 1984, the church was officially chartered as the Winnipeg Vietnamese and Chinese Church. James was ordained that same year.

In 1986 the church, recognizing the cultural and language differences between the two groups, divided into two congregations, with Vietnamese and Chinese-speaking members meeting separately. The Youngs associated with the Chinese group, which has become the Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite Brethren Church, while the other group is called the Winnipeg Vietnamese Mennonite Church.

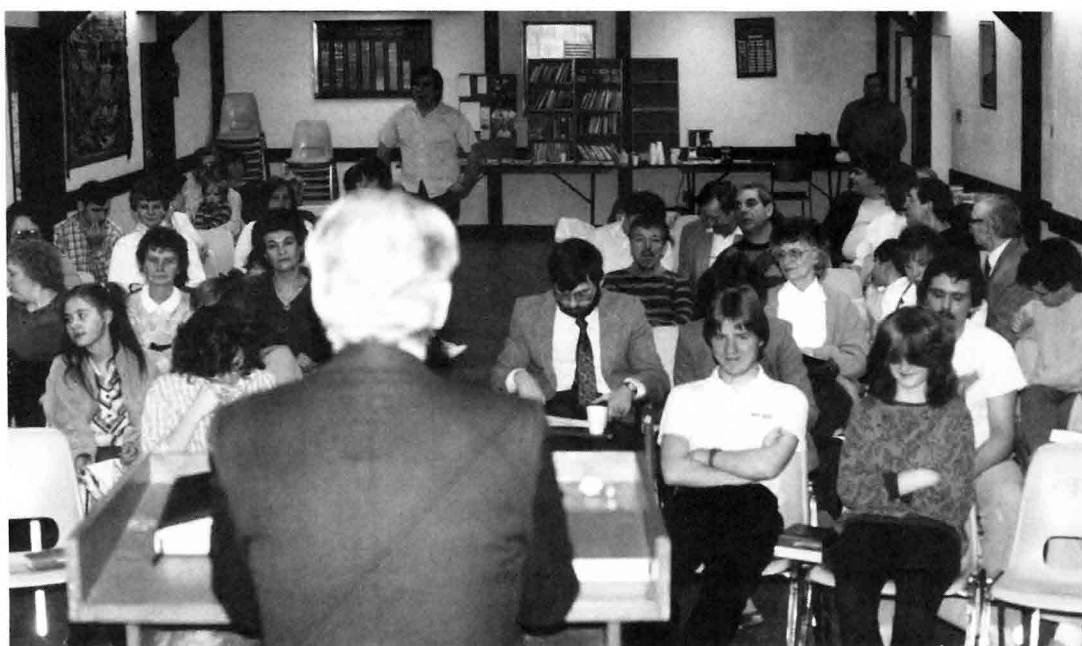
Around 55 people gather Sunday afternoons at the Chinese Church for worship and fellowship. The church has a choir, Sunday school program, prayer meetings, Bible studies and groups for the youth and the elderly.

At the chartering service in 1983, Young told the congregation and visitors that "even though our church is small, we want to thank God that he is with us. We are growing spiritually and in numbers. Please pray for us."

John G. Doerksen



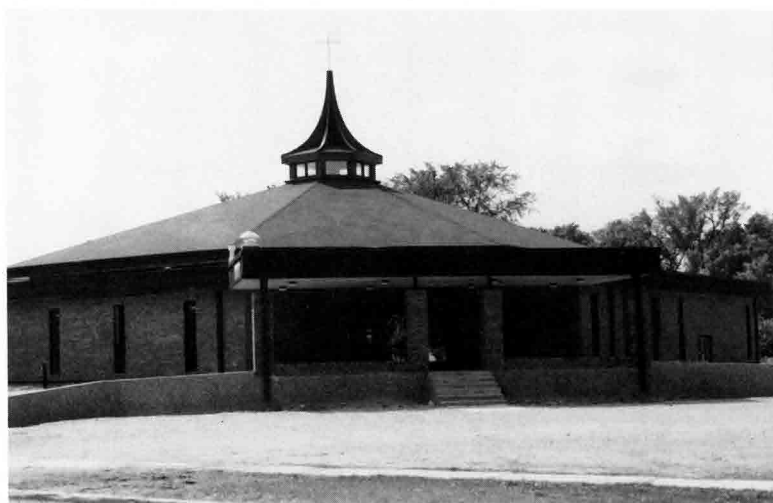
Top: Spanish Church, 1985, with leaders Jim Carter (l) and Delbert Enns (r); middle: St. Boniface Church; bottom, left: Helmut Huebert, then chairperson of the Board of Missions and Church Extension, at the Christian Resource Centre in Winnipeg, 1977; bottom, right: Jorge Perdonsin (l), Portuguese church leader, with Ken Neufeld, Church Extension director.





Clockwise from the top: The main plant and offices of the Palliser Furniture firm, employing over 1200 people, owned by members of the A.A. DeFehr family; the Comfort Division of Palliser Furniture, managed by Abe Dyck Jr. (r), here with Fred Dyck and Harold Froelich (l); Bill Fast, president of Willmar Windows, in the glass portion of the window-making plant; Palliser executives, brothers (l-r) Dave, Art and Frank DeFehr.

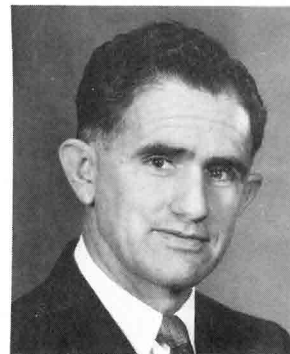
Wider Involvements

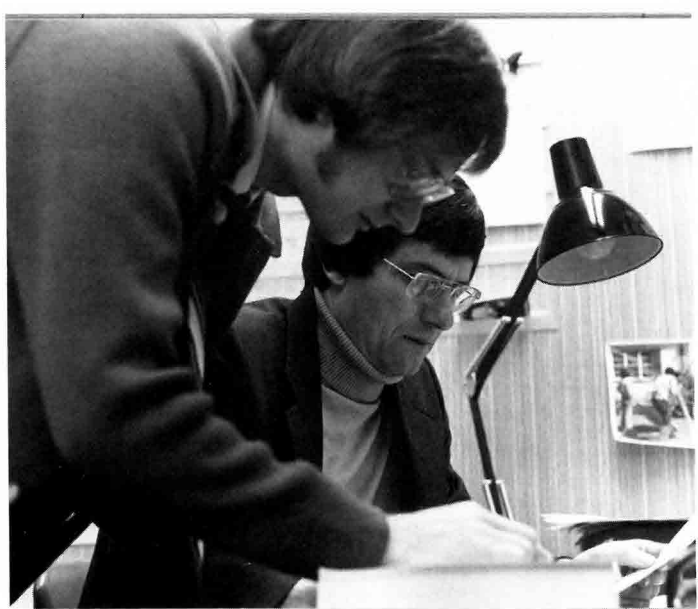


Clockwise from top: The new MCC Canada building, the contractor was Harry Giesbrecht, Portage Avenue Church member; the new Steinbach Mennonite Brethren meetingplace, dedicated 1987; Donwood South residence, Henderson Highway, Winnipeg, opened 1982; Donwood Manor Personal Care Home, founded by Winnipeg Mennonite Brethren in 1970; the groundbreaking for Donwood West, a condominium project, Mayor Bill Norrie, Legislative speaker Myrna Phillips, board chairman Walter Thiessen and building chairman Alfred Schellenberg turning sod.



Mennonite Brethren Communications





Both pages: Mennonite Brethren Communications (MBC). Originally called the Gospel Light Hour, it was founded in 1946 by three MBBC students. It became a part of the Manitoba Conference in 1954. Opposite page, clockwise from top left: John Schmidt, English-language speaker; D.B. Wiens, founder of the Russian-language program; 1950s quartet (Victor Martens, Henry Braun, Rudy Boschman, Lawrence Warkentin, Bertha Klassen, pianist); speaker P.R. Toews; Henry Brucks, co-founder of MBC with Bert Loewen and Henry Poetker, two other co-founders; early quartet; present MBC building, dedicated 1985. This page (clockwise from top left): Speaker Henry Regehr of German programming; TV producers Marvin Thiessen, Lorlie Barkman; 1950s choir; MBC-sponsored help line; Russian choir, D.B. Wiens (inset).



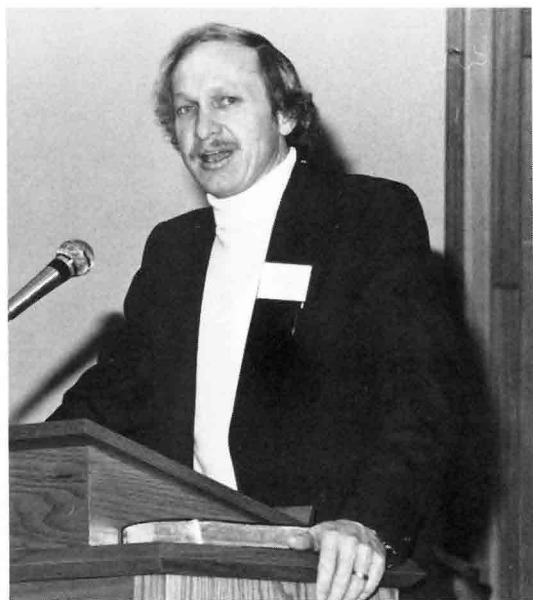


Clockwise from the top: John J. Neufeld of MB Communications Low German releases reporting to the Manitoba convention, 1981; Katie and Paul Wiebe, favorite singers on MBC's German releases; John J. Neufeld and Neil Klassen of MBC; groundbreaking for the new MBC building, moderator John B. Epp speaking; the 1986 staff of MB Communications.



Across the Province

Clockwise from right: Thompson Church pastor Gary Sawatzky at Christian Day camps in northern Manitoba; North Kildonan deacons with former pastors William Neufeld and Roland Marsch, 1980; Elm Creek Church youth; Snow Lake pastor John Klassen; Elm Creek Church youth.

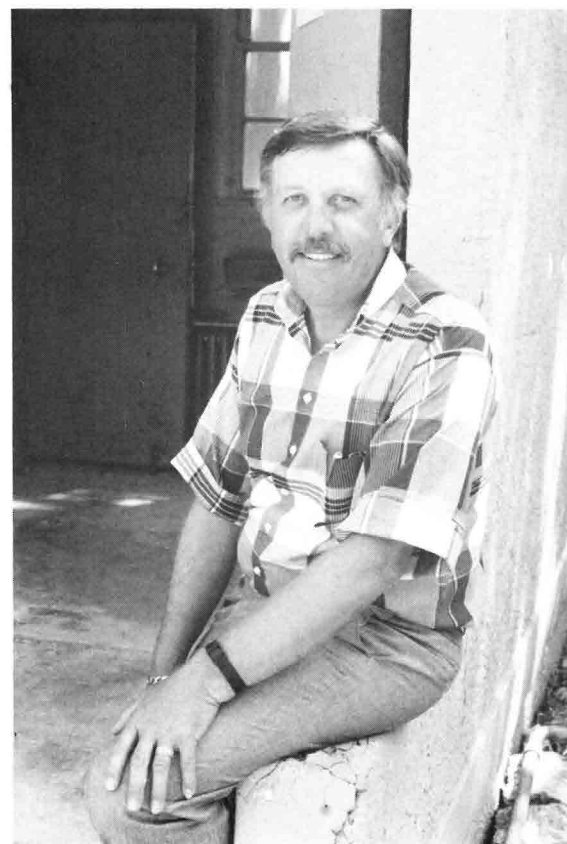




Clockwise from the top: Abe and Irene Neufeld, for many years missionaries to Austria, and sons Tom, Charles and Gary; Ron Braun, associate pastor of the North Kildonan Church; Isaac and Anna Redekopp, many years pastor couple of the Elmwood Church; Bill Fast, Winnipeg businessman and active in many conference boards; Albert Loewen of Steinbach speaking from the floor at the 1980 Manitoba convention; Gerhard Klassen, first leader of the North Kildonan Church, 1930; William Neufeld, teacher and longtime pastor of the North Kildonan Church.



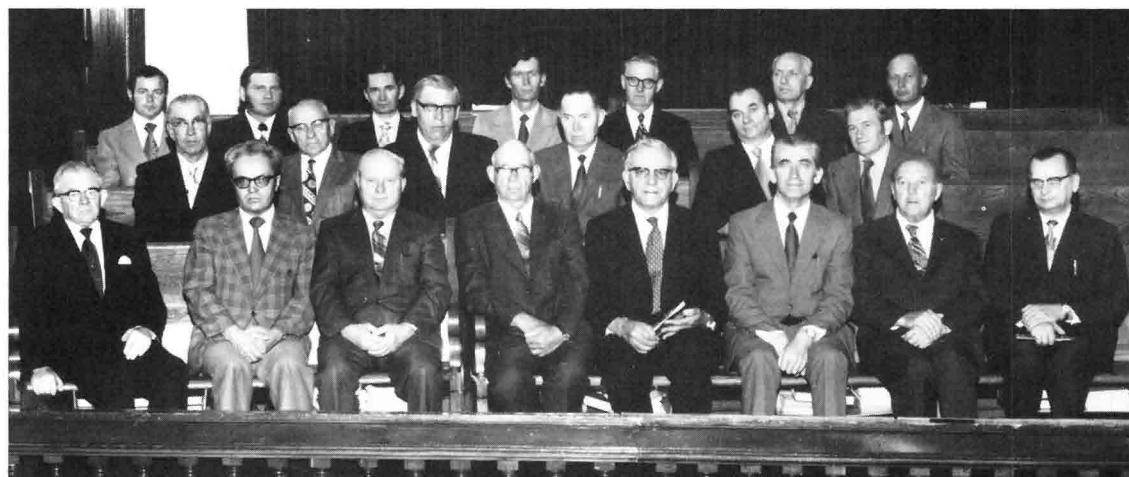
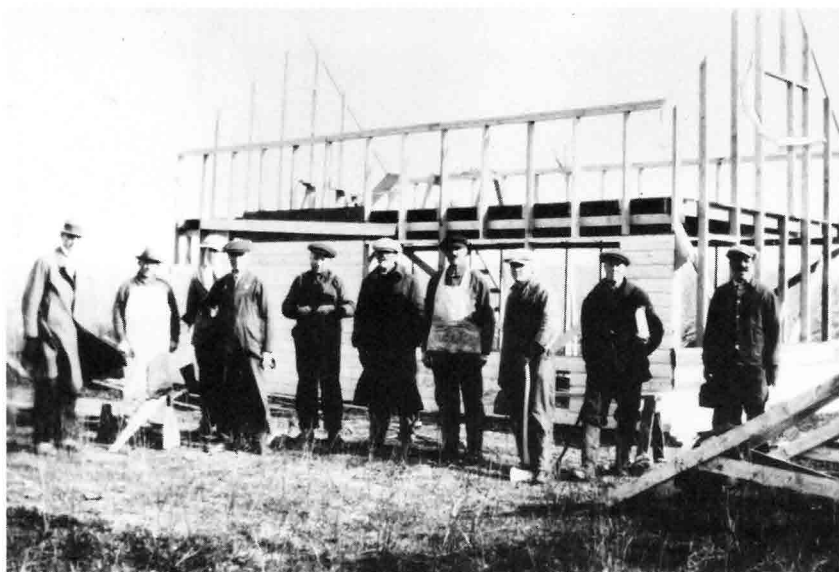
People and Places



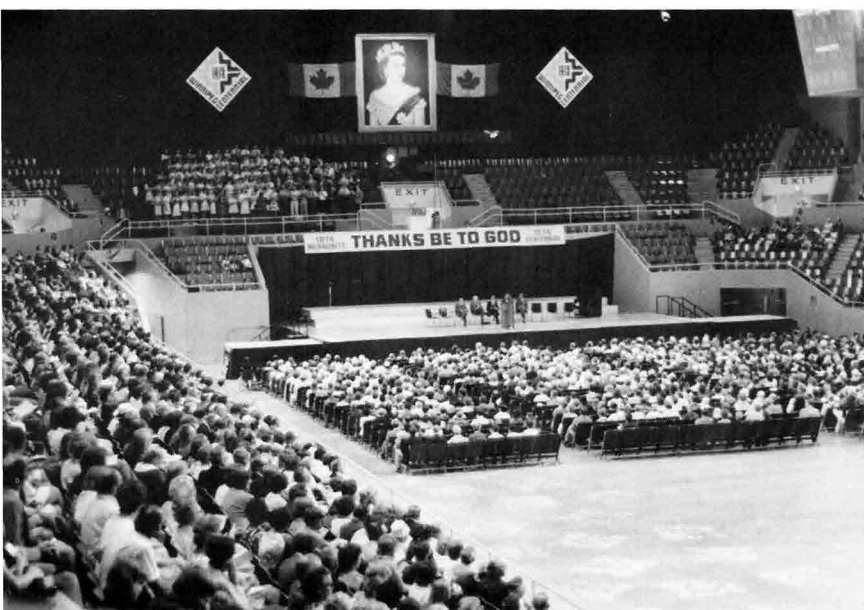


Clockwise from left: J.A. Toews, moderating 1966 conference; Lorina Marsch, North Kildonan Church, with Irene Loewen, MB Biblical Seminary, at 1987 Manitoba Women's Conference; federal cabinet minister Jake Epp, former Steinbach Church member; Elm Creek choir outing, 1950s; Martens brothers' quartet (l-r), William, George, John and Peter.

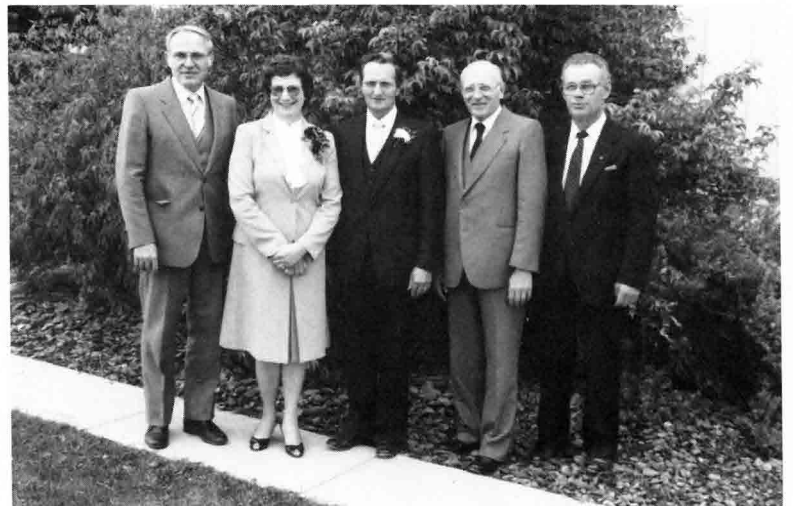




Clockwise from the top left: Construction of first North Kildonan Church (l-r), W.J. Wilson, J. Spenst, John DeFehr, A.C. DeFehr, P. Kornelson, J.M. Langemann, Peter Toews, G. Spenst, J. Spenst, Abe Wittenberg; Brigade leader Don Loewen with boys at River East church; 1974 baptismal candidates, Portage Avenue Church; 1974 Mennonite Centennial celebration, Winnipeg Arena; 1973 Central Church, Winnipeg, church council.



Clockwise from top: Mary Kasper leads North Kildonan Church children in singing; David and Laurena Bergen are welcomed as pastoral couple to the Richmond Park Church, Brandon, 1986, with them Rueben Willems, David Ewert and Abe Froese; the family of John B. and Katie Epp, conference moderator in 1987-88; leading and ministering couples of the Elm Creek Church, Nick and Anne Dick, Jake and Kay Kroeker, Maria and J.P. Neufeld, and Laura and Neil Funk, in the late '70s; Premier Edward Schreyer at the opening of Donwood Manor Personal Care Home, speaking with the Cornelius Regehrs, 1970.



Who were the Moderators?

During the first few years of the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Conference, the chairman or moderator was elected at the convention and presided only for the duration of the convention, since there was no standing organization that supervised conference matters throughout the rest of the year.

Only the secretary was elected for a 12 month period. His main responsibility was the preparation of lists of ministers to serve at special meetings in various churches.



Jake Falk (1979-80)

The chairmen of conventions through the years:

June, 1929—Johann Warkentin
 November, 1929—Johann Warkentin
 May, 1930—Johann G. Wiens
 October, 1930—Jacob B. Penner
 May, 1931—Jacob B. Penner
 September, 1931—Jacob B. Penner
 June, 1932—Jacob B. Penner
 September, 1932—Johann G. Wiens
 June, 1933—Johann G. Wiens
 September, 1933—Henry S. Voth
 May, 1934—Henry S. Voth
 September, 1934—Abram H. Unruh
 June, 1935—Johann G. Wiens
 September, 1935—Johann G. Wiens
 June, 1936—Abram H. Unruh
 September, 1936—David D. Derksen
 June, 1937—Abram H. Unruh
 September, 1937—Johann G. Wiens
 May, 1938—Heinrich P. Toews
 September, 1938—Henry S. Voth
 June, 1939—Henry S. Voth
 September, 1939—Abram H. Unruh
 May, 1940—Henry S. Voth
 September, 1940—Henry S. Voth
 June, 1941—Henry S. Voth
 Fall, 1941—Henry S. Voth
 Spring, 1942—Henry S. Voth
 Fall, 1942—Abram H. Unruh
 Spring, 1943—
 Fall, 1943—Henry S. Voth
 Spring, 1944—Henry S. Voth
 Fall, 1944—Henry S. Voth
 Spring, 1945—Henry S. Voth
 Fall, 1945—Henry S. Voth
 Spring, 1946—Henry S. Voth
 Fall, 1946—David D. Derksen
 Spring, 1947—Henry S. Voth
 Fall, 1947—John B. Toews



I.W. Redekopp (1956-57, '61)




H.H. Janzen (1949-50, '52-'53, 55)

From 1947 onward only one convention was held every year. They were usually held in spring, mostly in June.

1948—John B. Toews
 1949—Henry H. Janzen
 1950—Henry H. Janzen
 1951—John A. Toews
 1952—Henry H. Janzen
 1953—Henry H. Janzen
 1954—John A. Toews
 1955—H.H. Janzen
 1956—Isaac W. Redekopp
 1957—Isaac W. Redekopp
 1958—John A. Toews
 1959—Jacob H. Quiring
 1960—Frank C. Peters
 1961—Isaac W. Redekopp
 1962—Frank C. Peters
 1963—Herman Lenzmann
 1964—Herman Lenzmann
 1965—John A. Toews
 1966—John A. Toews
 1967—Victor Adrian
 1968—Henry R. Baerg
 1969—Henry R. Baerg
 1970—Henry H. Voth
 1971—Henry H. Voth
 1972—Victor D. Toews
 1973—Victor D. Toews
 1974—Jacob M. Klassen
 1975—Jacob M. Klassen
 1976—Henry H. Voth
 1977—Peter G. Klassen
 1978—Peter G. Klassen
 1979—Jake Falk
 1980—Jake Falk
 1981—Allan Labun
 1982—Allan Labun
 1983—John B. Epp
 1984—John B. Epp
 1985—Roland Marsch
 1986—Roland Marsch
 1987—John B. Epp



Clockwise from far left: Victor Adrian (1967); Heinrich Toews and wife Katerina (1938); Jake M. Klassen and wife Katherine (1974-75); Allan Labun (1981-82).



Looking Back In Faith grew out of the conviction that various ways must be found to remember the Church's spiritual history

For Mennonite Brethren of Manitoba (*as for Mennonite Brethren of all Canada*) 1988 is a special year. It marks the centennial of their first congregation in Canada, at Burwalde, Manitoba.

Looking Back In Faith collects many photos and a number of pieces of writing to highlight how God has led this branch of His people. The hope is that those who read and see will be inspired in the faith that brought Mennonite Brethren through their first century in Canada.